

The Trinity

East/West Dialogue

Edited by
MELVILLE Y. STEWART



THE TRINITY

STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Volume 24

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THE TRINITY

East/West Dialogue

Edited by

MELVILLE Y. STEWART

*The University of St. Thomas,
St. Paul, U.S.A.*

RICHARD SWINBURNE

introduction

EUGENE GRUSHETSKY

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translators



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The Icon of the Holy Trinity, Andrei Rublev, ca. 1410

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To my loving wife,

Donna Mae

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*Professor Peter van Inwagen was invited to the symposium, but because the conference was rescheduled, could not make it. His paper is included.

PREFACE

The first gathering of members of the Society of Christian Philosophers (SCP) from the West with Russian scholars held in St. Petersburg at the Academy of Science Building, April, 1993, was mainly an engagement of members of the academy. The second, also held in St. Petersburg, again at the Academy of Science Building, focused on the Atonement, and quite appropriately enlisted several Russian Orthodox theologians, and a number of SCP philosophers, thus in some ways it brought together the academy and the Church. But the most recent gathering in Moscow, was a first for the SCP. After an initial overture issuing from the Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, plans were finalized for a very significant exchange on the Trinity. The Russian Orthodox Church, so important in the life of Russia despite several decades of isolation and devastation incurred by the oppressive control and influence of the Soviet Union, was happy to discuss with us a pivotal doctrine of the Christian faith, the Holy Trinity. The SCP with a membership representing the three main traditions of the Christian faith, Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism, sent a team of scholars representing Western and Eastern Christianity matched for the occasion.

Another dimension enhances the uniqueness of this event. Philosophers were invited to sit down with theologians—philosophers of the analytic tradition with a firm commitment to Christianity. That is a rare sight, whatever the time or place. There was a shared central objective, namely, to examine and explore meaningful ways to understand God as a trinity. Those gathered were intent upon couching religious belief in easy-to-understand contemporary idiom. It was a rewarding encounter of Eastern scholars sharing the richness of their history and heritage, and of Western participants responding with careful, incisive analytic turns. It was a most memorable trading of ideas and arguments, beliefs and insights.

The breaks from formal venues and mealtimes provided opportunities for belief reexamination and reaction to new ideas. Both sides realized with greater sensitivity the enormity of the task and the profoundness of the subject matter. The hospitality of our Russian hosts was extraordinary. Friendships were formed and at the close there were anticipations of future events leading to greater mutual understanding and appreciation of similarities and differences between East and West.

A Russian Edition edited by Alexander Kyrlezhev has been published in Moscow. It is hoped that the collection of papers made available now also in an English Edition will stimulate further discussion, and promote greater appreciation of and clearer understanding of God as Trinity. Whatever good may come out of the symposium and the proceedings published in both

languages, may all praise and glory go to the Holy Trinity, God the Creator-Father, Jesus the Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete-Teacher.

Special thanks to the Paul and Dawn Sjolund Foundation, and the Salem and Wooddale churches for their gifts that helped fund the conference. Thanks to Sarah Jacobson, Faculty Secretary at Bethel College, for her careful attention to detail in preparing the final draft of the manuscript for publication. Thanks, too, to Bethel College for providing support services so that this manuscript may be prepared for publication. A special appreciation to the Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Danilov Hotel and Monastery, for arranging this event, and for providing the facilities for these very important meetings to take place.

Special thanks are also in order to Kluwer Academic Publishers of the Netherlands for including this book in their series, *Studies in Philosophy and Religion*.

Finally, a word of appreciation must be given to Professor Richard Swinburne, Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oriel College, Oxford University, who worked with the Moscow Patriarchate in putting together the program of presenters, and arranged the entire conference.

Melville Y. Stewart
Editor

INTRODUCTION

There took place in Moscow from 6th to 9th June 2001 a conference on the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, organized jointly by the Society of Christian Philosophers and the Theological Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church. The speakers were provided in approximately equal numbers by the two organizations; and this book contains the final versions in English of most of the papers delivered there (together with one paper—by Peter van Inwagen—prepared for the conference, but not delivered at it). The speakers shared a common Christian faith, but their approaches to the subject were very different, reflecting the very different ambiances of philosophical–theological thought from which they come. The conference was opened, appropriately, by a message from his holiness Alexei II, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, stressing the origin and value of this doctrine in the spiritual life of the Church. This message was followed by the introductory paper of Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk, who expounded the doctrine and stressed its centrality and importance in showing us the personal nature of God.

The Society of Christian Philosophers is an international (though largely American) society of Christians (Catholic, Protestant and a few Orthodox) who teach philosophy in universities or colleges; and their philosophical background is the kind of philosophy taught today in universities of the English-speaking world. I describe in my own paper in this volume the area of modern Anglo–American philosophy of religion, and how it developed from its empiricist roots. Most of the papers of the SCP speakers were concerned with making sense of the doctrine of the Trinity, of how there can be (as the creeds affirm) one God yet three divine persons; and two of them were concerned with the history of the doctrine. There have always been two approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity. The first (more typical of Eastern Orthodox thought) starts from there being three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and tries to make sense of how nevertheless there is only one God. The second approach (more typical of Western thought, both Catholic and Protestant) starts from there being one God and tries to make sense of how nevertheless there can be ‘three persons’ constituting the Godhead. Dale Tuggy’s paper tries to show that the doctrine of the Trinity contains an apparent self-contradiction. The papers of Melville Stewart and Stephen Davis show in essence the first approach to the doctrine, and try to spell it out within that approach in a consistent way. The papers of Peter Forrest and

Peter van Inwagen try to make sense of the doctrine in a spirit more typical of the second approach.

The speakers nominated by the Theological Commission were all Russian Orthodox theologians and philosophers. The history of thought has been very important both for Orthodox theology (in its concern to understand the scriptures and the teaching of theologians of the early Christian centuries), and also for the continental style of philosophy which has been the major influence on Russian philosophy. Hence, three of the Russian papers (those of Archimandrite Januariy, Hegumen Hilarion Alfeyev, and Dr. Alexei Fokin) are concerned with the history of the doctrine; as are, from the Anglo-American side, the papers by Eleanore Stump and Charles Taliaferro. Vladimir Shokhin's paper compares the Christian doctrine of the Trinity with the Hindu model of *trimurti*. Alexander Kyrlezhev connects thinking about the Trinity with some themes of the continental tradition of philosophy. Worship has always been central to the Orthodox understanding of the Christian life, and venerating the icons which represent the central figures and doctrines of the Christian tradition has been central to Orthodox worship. Hence the paper by Michael Gromov on the role of the doctrine of the Trinity in Russian culture and art (and especially in iconography). The final two papers of this volume (those of Archpriest Vladimir Fedorov and Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia) are concerned with the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity in the mission of the Church and for the spiritual life of the Christian. It is appropriate that the author of the final paper, Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia belongs to both of the two worlds of thought which interacted in our conference. He is both a Bishop of the Orthodox Church, and an English philosophically-educated teacher of theology at Oxford. This volume is offered to English-speaking readers (as is the corresponding Russian-language volume offered to Russian-speaking readers), in prayer that we may all benefit from some very different Christian approaches to this most central of Christian doctrines.

The conference was a unique occasion. As Chairman of the SCP 'Outreach to Russia' committee, I would like to express my gratitude to the many donors who made this conference and the publication of its proceedings possible, to Mel Stewart for his work in securing these donations, and to our Russian hosts for making us so welcome. My special gratitude goes to the chairman of the Russian Theological Commission, Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk, for his total involvement in the conference and for his sympathy for its aims.

Richard Swinburne

GREETING FROM THE HOLY PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL OF RUSSIA, ALEXEI II

Your Eminence, all honored Fathers, Sisters, Brethren, and ladies and gentlemen:

Warmest greetings to you, the participants of this international theological–philosophical conference on “The Holy Trinity,” who are gathered today within the walls of the *Danilovskaya* Hotel complex.

It’s very symbolic in a way, that you are attending meetings taking place during the time when the Orthodox Church is in process of celebrating the Holy Fiftieth, a celebration in old Russia associated with the celebration of the Holy Trinity. All of which reminds us that the genuine way to a proper understanding of the Trinity as a single God is not so much something that results from rational analysis, as much as from moral growth and accomplishment, deep reflective prayer, a diligent effort to performing God’s law, and, most importantly, according to the words of the great Seraphim Sarivky, the illuminating grace of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to note that one of the most revered Russian saints, His Holiness of Russia, Sergei Radonezhskii, founder of the holy Russian church and monastery named *The Holy Trinity*, never wrote any theological works. Nevertheless he is described by a famous Russian Christian thinker, as the *leader of Russian theology*. His very life was an example of an incarnation of the Holy Spirit, by which he was moved to live a life of faith, a life that manifested the Holy Trinity, since we believe that God the Father and God the Son are inseparable from the Holy Spirit. That is precisely the wording in the church hymn, “With the Holy Spirit, any soul rises up with purity, with the Holy Mystery of the Trinity.” Contemplation of the Holy Trinity became for him the central focus and drive of his life, quite apart from any objective workings of the intellect. Moreover, it was a monastery that brought to the world the wonder of the supra–intellectual revelation of the Trinity—as represented by the icon painted by the reverend Andrei Rublev, of whom Father Pavel Florenskii said “If the Trinity of Rublev exists, there is a God.”

The call to ecclesiastical conciliation (*sobernost*)—brotherly and sisterly love and unity, to living in likeness (*po obrazy*) to the Trinity as a way of overcoming *the hated separation of the world*, has become the ideal of the Russian Christian soul.

Ecclesiastical conciliatory (*sobernost*) togetherness (*kafolichnost*), are key qualities of the Church according to the teachings of the Christian faith. God as Trinity cannot be known in the Church, yet the church through a

conciliatory togetherness, can through this approach achieve an understanding, because Father, Son and Holy Spirit revealed as Trinity, are not thus disclosed abstractly, like an intellectual pursuit of knowledge, but rather as a rule of life.

Sobornost then is an inner quality, but it is not shown on the outside. The same is true of the experience of the universality (*vselenskost*) of the church, and the universality of Christian teachings. The apostles, and their students, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, worked hard to spread the light of Christ “to the limits of the Universe.” Not long ago, we celebrated the Anniversary of the Birth in flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two thousand years of the historical existence of the Church of Christ boldly demonstrates that the light of Christian truth can and should enlighten any culture and any people. The Church through the centuries has aimed to include (*vozerkovit*) the greatest accomplishments of the human spirit and the human mind. The establishment of holy patriarchal theology is directly connected with the inclusion in the church of Antiochan philosophy, a task which is in process of actualization even today. After two thousand years of history, the Church is again faced with the matter of being relevant to the world in terms of constantly changing cultural contexts. Today it is important to include and set in Christian context everything which is important and valuable in modern culture and science. Orthodox theology is open to dialogue in various contexts, including science, culture, and philosophy. But that dialogue should not be seen as a compromise of Church principles and morals, and not as an intrusion of theology into the sphere of the sciences. Here, the dialogue that needs to be emphasized is based upon a mutual respect and with an aim to finding common ground and common values.

This is exactly why we are happy that the current conference continues this dialogue between orthodox theology and modern science and philosophy, an initiative developed by the Synodical Theological Commission of the Russian Orthodox Church the past few years.

I ardently wish you each success, as participants of the international theological–philosophical conference on The Holy trinity, in your upcoming efforts. And I hope that the results will be an important contribution to the development of dialogue between the Church and society and will strengthen the Church’s testimony to the world.

Alexei II
Patriarch of Moscow and all of Russia.
Moscow, June 6, 2001

THE REVELATION OF GOD AS TRINITY

Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk

The ultimate truth about God is the Holy Trinity, summarized in the liturgical text of the *Stichera* sung in the Pentecost *Compline*. This hymn is a call to faith in God as Trinity, and to worship him. The root idea is God is *One* in *Three*. Two principles express the essential unity that obtains, that of perfect and absolute unity, and that of perfect and absolute otherness. A third principle, *perichoresis* (inter-penetration), binds the other two. The revelation of God as Trinity is gradual, and has anthropological and social implications which enable the Church to respond to questions raised by modern man.

I cordially greet all of the participants gathered at this international theological conference.

Last Sunday, the Church gave special praise to God as One in the Trinity, liturgically remembering the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ's disciples on the Day of Pentecost—the greatest event initiating her beneficent service to the world. And today we have gathered in order to reflect together upon the mystery of God's being and the mystery of Divine Providence in behalf of the world and humanity.

God “ineffable, incomprehensible, invisible and inconceivable,” as the Anaphora of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom says, and in his equally indescribable mercy and love, was pleased to descend upon his fallen creation in order to open the way of salvation, that is, reconciliation with the Creator and restoration of communion between God and man. This reconciliation and salvation are impossible without a knowledge of God which becomes available to us in revelation, written and unwritten, church-wide and personal. God, fundamentally inconceivable in his essence and in his inner life, communicates to us a certain knowledge of himself, always incomplete but essential for our salvation. This is a paradox characteristic of Christian experience and Christian thought. We not only believe in God and feel his

beneficent action, but actually come to a knowledge of God as Creator of everything and Redeemer of sinful humanity.

“To see God as he is” is a daring call reflecting the paradox of God’s “incomprehensible knowledge” written about by Achimandrite Sohronius (Sakharov), a contemporary Russian ascetic and Athonite who ended his service in the British Isles. Though we may not possess special mystical gifts, which are acquired through long and arduous spiritual effort and proved by actively loving our neighbors, nevertheless we can respond to a call to the theological vision contained in the Catholic Church Tradition. Today, we are called again to work towards a knowledge of God through spiritual and intellectual communion with the Great Fathers and Doctors of the Church. We believe that what has been revealed to us in Christ and the Spirit is not some partial knowledge, but truth about God comprehensible to the human mind. For God the Creator does not transcend all that he has created, but also enters his created world as a participant in human life, as the one who takes upon himself the cross of this world so that it may be enlightened by divine wisdom.

The ultimate truth about God that has been revealed to the Church is the truth of the Holy Trinity. This is a truth of faith that we are to discuss at our conference.

“Glory to the holy, consubstantial, life-giving and undivided Trinity, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages” is an exclamation offered every day in the morning liturgical service of the Orthodox Church. Familiarity with Orthodox liturgy leaves no room for doubt that the praise of God offered as One in the Trinity is not only the Church’s *leitmotif*, its refrain, but also its dogmatic foundation.

This liturgical confession of God the Trinity is expressed most vividly in the famous Stichera sung after, *Lord, I have cried*, in the *Pentecost Compline*:

Come, O peoples, let us venerate the tri-hypostatic Deity, the Son in the Father, with the Holy Spirit. For before time the Father generated the Son, sharing His eternity and His Throne; and the Holy Spirit was in the Father, glorified together with the Son. One Power, one Essence, one Deity, whom we all venerate and say: Holy God, who created all things through the Son, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit; Holy Mighty, through whom we knew the Father and the Holy Spirit dwelt in the world; Holy Immortal, the Spirit Comforter, who proceeds from the Father and abides in the Son, Holy Trinity, glory to Thee.

This liturgical text summarizes the Christian understanding of the triune nature of God.

First of all, it is a church hymn. It is a call to not only confess faith in the Triune God, but also a call to venerate Him. That is, it sets the right pattern for acquiring knowledge of God. This does not involve abstract theorizing, even of a theological sort, but rather a life of concrete veneration of God

accomplished through the common liturgical prayer life of church in community.

At the same time, in the very beginning of this church hymn we see an expression that is at once capacious and yet precise: *tri-hypostatic Deity*. These words in compact form contain the basic meaning of trinitarian doctrine.

The Church conceives of God as One in Three. *One*, refers to *Deity*, and in the Greek, *theiotes*, serves as an impersonal name. It is a term used to point to the *essence* or *nature* of God. This uncreated Divine One is understood as existing and realized in *Hypostases*, which is a term that brings into focus the *Persons* of the Divine Trinity. Thus the “impersonal” in God, or what may be described as his *nature* or *essence*, cannot be conceived outside of the personal mode of existence. In other words, in God there is nothing “impersonal,” hence the divinity of God can be properly conceived only in its hypostaseity, namely, in and through the co-existence of the Three Divine Persons.

Now, in the text under analysis, we see the hypostatic names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The divine Hypostases are eternal and co-eternal; they are on the other side [outside] of created time, since the Father *before time* generates the Son who is *in the Father*, and the Spirit *was in the Father*, that is, was always with Him and in Him (here let us remember the words of the First Priestly Prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ: *as you Father are in me, and I am in you*—Jn. 17:21). The Hypostases *share eternity*, that is, they co-exist eternally with each other, since they are at the same time *one Power, one Essence, and one Deity*. They are spoken of as *sharing the throne*, that is, as sitting on one *highest throne*, an expression which points to the divine status and divine power had by each (The Slavonic word for *sharing eternity*, literally means, *co-eternally existent*, which corresponds to the more complex philosophical and theological term, *consubstantiality*, which was introduced in the *Creed* to express the *inter-trinitarian relation of the Father to the Son*, who is described as *consubstantial with the Father*).

Regarding teaching on the Trinity, the essential unity is in balance with the hypostatic distinction. The “principle” of perfect and absolute unity is parsed here in terms of another “principle,” spelled out in terms of *equally perfect and absolute otherness*. Unity is expressed in terms of *nature* or *essence*, while *otherness* is couched in terms of *hypostasis* or *person* (In Russian, [the latter] is expressed rather precisely via *raz-luchiye* (*distinction*), which literally means, *difference of person*, hence it brings out a distinction residing in the term *person* rather than in *essence*).

Along with these two “principles” Patristic theology introduced a third, which brings together and binds the first two. It is *perichoresis*, which translates, *inter-penetration*. This term originally applied by St. John of Damascus to the relationships had among the members of the Hypostases, has

enriched Trinitarian theology. The Greek term, *perichoresis*, does not find an adequate translation into the Latin, *communicatio idiomatum* (*communication of properties*). Initially, *perichoresis* had the meaning of *neighborhood*, as when a neighbor lives around a *chora*, a *place* or *land*. When it is applied to the relationships had among the Hypostases, it enhances a kind of paradoxicality. Indeed, on the one hand, the Three Divine Persons have only one *common place* (following the *neighborhood* notion associated with *place*). Here, the Russian language doesn't help us much. In fact it fails us, because the Russian term for *nature*, *priroda*, implies *generation*, which is conceptually inappropriate if one is contemplating the Godhead. So it is better here to use the more capacious Greek concept, *physis*. On the other hand, the absolute distinction in God cannot be literally absolute. Each of the Persons has his own special and unique *place* in the divine being, but this *place* is not a *property*, [much less] a *fortress* (as in English when one says, *my house is my fortress*), but rather a *neighborhood* (and here we get closer in concept if we say, *good-neighborliness*). This notion of *neighborhood* in the sense of *personal inter-penetration of neighbors* helps overcome the danger of understanding the distinction [we see] in Hypostases as a division in the divine unity.

In the liturgical text under discussion, *perichoresis* is expressed by the words, *was in the Father*, which refers to both the Son and the Spirit. We read in St. John of Damascus, "The Hypostases are one in the other, according to He Who said: *I am in the Father, and the Father is in me.*" And in the same work he writes: "They (the Hypostases) unite...not confused but cleaving together and interpenetrating one another without confusion or transmutation" (St. John of Damascus, *A Precise Exposition of the Right Faith*, 8).

Thus, the first part of the hymn expresses what textbooks call the teaching on *God in Himself*, or, as today's theologians would say, the teaching on *the immanent Trinity*.

The second part refers to the Trinity as revealed in relation to the world and man, that is, as in the economy of salvation. Here, we are reminded of the old Biblical exclamation found in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Is. 6:3). This formula is interpreted by the Church as a prototype of trinitarianism. It is a version of the *Trisagion*: *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal*.

The one God in relation to creation is also revealed as Trinity: the Father, who is the first to be ascribed the name *God*, acts in creation and providence through the Son and the Spirit: the Son, through whom we come to know God the Father and receive the Holy Spirit in this world; the Spirit, who, after the Lord Jesus Christ, is *another Comforter* (Jn. 14:16), proceeds from the Father but at the same time *dwells* in the Son, that is, acts and abides in unity with the Son.

The hymn concludes with a praise, a *doxology*, a kind of liturgical seal verifying the right confession: *O Holy Trinity, glory to Thee*.

A characteristic of this liturgical text is its failure to mention Jesus Christ. This is because it is a trinitarian text. At the same time, there is a clear distinction between two aspects of the triune nature of God. There is a divine existence on the one hand, and divine action addressed to the world, on the other. Here, the faithful hear, first the teaching on the tri-hypostatic nature of the transubstantiated God, and second, the teaching on the salvific initiative of God the Trinity which is at once threefold and one.

The vision of the Trinity comes to us—is generated within the church community. The Church gradually formulates and clarifies her initial faith and her liturgical experience. St. Peter addresses Christians as those who are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:2). St. Paul concludes his letter to the Corinthians with the words often also pronounced by the priest during the standard liturgy: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14).

The Tri-Unity is first of all revealed through Jesus as the Christ, Lord, God and Man. The same is also revealed through the Spirit who descended upon the disciples of Christ at Pentecost. Earlier, He had also been given to the apostles by Christ the Saviour when he said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:22).

Trinitarian doctrine has been revealed gradually. It developed within the liturgical community and the brotherhood and fellowship of Christ’s disciples. First an insight into the mystery of the Father–Son relation was gained, and an understanding of *consubstantiality* was established. Then the Church expressed its belief *that another Comforter* was sent from the Father through the Son. He was not seen as *an auxiliary spirit*, but as the Lord. Hence he must be venerated *together with the Father and the Son*. Thus, an initial *economic* Trinity, understood in terms of a threefold action in relation to the world, developed into a knowledge and dogmatic expression of an *immanent* Trinity, that is, a pre-world God conceived in terms of his own existence.

It is necessary to distinguish here between these two aspects of the divine nature, but at the same time see their relationship. Indeed, human knowledge of God’s existence is possible only because humanity was created in the image of God. The revelation of the Trinity is also a revelation given to man about himself since he was designed and made by the Creator. While being completely different from the Creator as a created being, man also bears a resemblance to the pre-world Godhead as to *mode of existence*. The way in which man exists makes it possible for him to comprehend how God himself exists. And trinitarian doctrine formulated by the Fathers, is confirmed, as it were, in reverse by its correspondence to peculiarities of human existence.

What is the nature of this correspondence disclosed through the teaching on God as Trinity? It lies in the fact that both God's and man's existence, according to the Scriptures, is *personal*. The "principle" of existence is not confined to impersonal ontology. The unity of existence is not confined to *number as an intelligible mathematical structure*, nor to *universal order*, not to *matter* or other elements, nor to some *cosmic bodiless, formless spirit*. Existence in its most radical sense, involves *personal existence*: what exists in both cases are *persons* in the unity of their *nature*. It is Person who dominates existence, since he gathers in himself existence in its integrity. Person is the one who comes out to meet others, remaining as he is, without any confusion with anybody or anything.

At the same time, trinitarian doctrine as a teaching of Persons in the Trinity, distinguishes each Person in God's existence, but does not reject the "principle" of essential or natural unity, but rather offers a new understanding of this unity. Thus the distinction of Persons does not fragment the one existence. On the contrary, the Persons assert it, since a Person as such cannot exist in isolation from other Persons, but only in mutual relations and communion. This is a "definition" of a *divine Person* or *Hypostasis*.

The priority of Person over nature with the understanding of Person as asserting the divine unity expresses the patristic teaching on *monarchy*, that is, the undivided authority of the Father in the Trinity. The Father is the source and the cause of the divine unity. The Father *before time*, eternally generates the Son and emanates the Spirit who *was in the Father* eternally. And the three eternally co-existent Hypostases, being as St. Maxim the Confessor put it, "in the eternal movement of love," exist as "one Power, one Essence, one Deity."

Thus, Christian theology does not see in God a *problem* of relationships between *unity* and *multiplicity*. On the contrary, it is God as known by the Church who set the mode or pattern of this way of existence, which is described in the Scriptures as the "image of perfection." The definition given by St. John, *God is love* (I Jn. 8:16), means that God is not an impersonal divine essence (only a *Godhead*), but an essential unity realized as the eternal mutual love of the three Divine Hypostases.

Trinitarian teaching at the same time has a doctrinal, ontological and ethical significance. In saying, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect....." God enjoins man, not on the grounds of *what should be*, but on the grounds of *what is* in God himself. The word *love* in this case does not designate a *feeling* or *disposition*, because it is strictly a theological term. Perfect love is the image of the Triune God's existence. The Trinity *is* love. In this lies the primary meaning of our trinitarian doctrine, for the Trinity is commandment.

The summation of theological teaching of the Church is subject to the law of gradual exposition of the ultimate truth of the Triune God. This law can be

described as history in view of the fact that it was Christianity that introduced the idea of history in human culture. Knowledge of God is historical since Divine Revelation itself is historical. It is a peculiarity of knowledge of God. There is a paradox of time and eternity meeting and inter-penetrating. It is another example of what is described in Greek as *perichoresis*: divine eternity and human time are *neighbors*, but in such a way as to penetrate each other. The height or maximum expression of this inter-penetration is the divine-human nature of Christ. An historical consequence of the coming of Christ is the Church, His Body on earth. The Church lives in time, but it is the Church's time—the time that contains the presence of the eternity of the Triune God.

One cannot help recall at this point the famous words of St. Gregory the Theologian, which moreover we should take into account if we are to avoid falling into excessive historicism or inappropriate theorizing: "The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the Deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit Himself dwells among us and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of Himself.... The light of the Trinity might shine upon the more illumined by gradual additions, as David says, going up, and advancing and progressing from glory to glory" (*Homile*, 31).

Perhaps it is worthwhile to ask ourselves the question: Should we not pay special attention to these words of St. Gregory in the present historical situation as well? Of course, the point is not to develop in one way or another the dogmatic teaching of the Church on the Triune God. On the contrary, we should delve into the trinitarian theology of the Holy Fathers as deeply as possible in order to express the original faith of the Church in new historical and cultural situations. I should think that today, in the situation of crisis where those who share a common Christian awareness, but who also experience the secularity of society, and the dehumanization and corruption of God's image in man, believers should enthusiastically embrace the Church's teaching on the Triune God, and that it should become a primary source for the re-Christianization of the world to which we are all called.

Today's world is concerned to protect personal sovereignty, on the one hand, and seek after an inter-personal and common human unity, on the other. The public debate has been dominated by these two themes: individual human rights and globalization as an external form of integration. Here lies the present-day conflict and problem.

The actualization and application of the teaching on the Triune God, which has anthropological and social implications, make it possible to give a Christian answer to the questions asked by modern man. All human beings are consubstantial, not by blood, as in an association with a particular race and ethnicity, but primarily in their human nature. But at the same time every human being is a unique *hypostasis* of the created world. Human *hypostases*

are absolutely different and cannot be reduced to a *common denominator* that is ethnic, political or cultural. But at the same time, persons are called to be *good neighbors*, to be in the *inter-penetration process*, without abolishing their uniqueness, through a communion in love, that is, a communion of hypostases that is equally honorable and equally sharing the throne in a common humanity. It is only through this unconfused and undivided communion that a human personality can be fulfilled as an image-bearer of the Divine Trinity.

In other words, every person is called to become the fullest possible personality in the fullest possible closeness to the mode of existence found in the Triune God. In a spiritual communion with the Tri-hypostatic God, the Christian should learn to be an hypostasis of the created world, the human community; to be a person, in spite of all contrary forces, acting in the image of the service performed by Christ the Saviour upon the cross.

The need to actualize the Church teaching on the Trinity is dictated by other considerations as well. Unfortunately, not only in the secular realm, but in Church awareness as well, the essence of Christian faith is often reduced to a confession of Christ as Saviour, the Son of God who came into the world for the sake of salvation. What is reduced to background, is not only the coming of Christ and the purging of our sins accomplished by him, but also this new revelation about God—the revelation of his triune nature. For “God [the Father] has spoken to us by his Son,” who is “the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:3). Through Christ we come to a knowledge of the Trinity. Moreover, “no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit” (I Cor. 12:3).

Faith in God the Trinity is a dogmatic foundation of church existence, and at the same time the ultimate Christian revelation. Knowledge of the Divine Trinity as expressed in the writings of the Church Doctors is a spiritual task. And perhaps it is time for Christians, especially theologians, to commit themselves to a comprehension of this ultimate truth of the faith, not so as to invent new dogma, but rather to gain an insight into the mysterious meaning of God’s existence so as to become aware of the primary importance of this knowledge of the Triune God. This would be an inspiring achievement, and could give new strength and vigor to the Christian witness to the world. And then, carrying *the whole armour of God* (Eph. 6:11), we will be able to fulfill the commandment of Christ the Saviour, “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19).

MODERN ANGLO-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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The development of logical positivism into modern Anglo-American (“analytic”) philosophy involved the recognition that for propositions to be meaningful it was necessary only that they should be confirmable or disconfirmable by experience; and that often they used words in analogical or metaphorical senses. This allowed the development of philosophy of religion within that tradition, claiming that propositions about God were also confirmable and used words in analogical and metaphorical senses. Some analytic philosophers have claimed that the proposition that there is a God can be properly basic (that is needs no argument in order for us justifiably to hold it), while others claimed that good arguments can be produced for the existence of God. It is within such a developed philosophy of religion, that Anglo-American philosophers have developed views about the meaning and justification of the doctrine of the Trinity.

I thought that it would be useful at the beginning of our conference to set in their context the papers which you will hear from Anglo-American participants on the doctrine of the Trinity. Over the past sixty years there have been two very different streams of “Western philosophy.” The stream which we call “continental philosophy” is philosophy as it has been practised in France and Germany and many of the countries of continental Europe, including both pre-Revolutionary and Marxist Russia. It has roots in Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Very different though these philosophers are from each other, they have given rise to a kind of philosophy which has a certain common terminology and unity of approach to philosophical problems. Contemporary continental philosophers paint very vague and general pictures of the world. Their writings are more like literature than science. It was from the continental stream and especially, I guess, from the work of Heidegger and Nietzsche that the form of scepticism known as

post-modernism emerged. The vast majority of contemporary Western theologians, including Bultmann, Barth, Tillich, and Rahner, and almost all Anglo-American theologians have written under the influence of continental philosophy.

The kind of philosophy which is taught and written in English-speaking countries is called "Anglo-American" or "analytic" philosophy; and this is closer to science than to literature. It has its more remote roots in the British empiricists of the eighteenth century—Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Its more immediate source is the logical positivism of the physicists of the Vienna circle of the 1920s, which was widely disseminated in Britain through the publication in 1936 of A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, and developed in the U.S.A. through the writings of the logician W.V.O. Quine. These philosophers all held that "all knowledge comes from experience." The Logical Positivists went further and affirmed the verification principle, according to which the only propositions which had meaning were those which could be verified or falsified; all others were meaningless rubbish.

At first they meant by this—"conclusively verified or falsified"; and since virtually nothing in ordinary life, or history, or the natural sciences which the positivists respected so highly can be verified or falsified conclusively—that is incorrigibly, that version of the principle soon seemed to them implausible. They soon recognised that physicists reason from what they can observe to big conclusions about what they cannot observe,—about what is happening on a scale too small or too big to be observed, or what will happen tomorrow or in two centuries time—which may be false, but which are probable given what they observe. And so the logical positivists began to affirm, more plausibly, that to be meaningful a proposition must be confirmable or unconfirmable by experience; there must be the possibility of some evidence making it somewhat more or less probable. However, it seemed to some of us that there was no reason to believe even the moderate version of the verification principle. We understand a sentence, and so the proposition which it expresses has a meaning if we understand the form of the sentence and the individual words which compose it. We understand the form and the words if we know how to confirm sentences of that form and sentences in which those words are used, even if we do not know how to show the sentence in question probable or improbable. We understand the sentence "Once upon a time, before the existence of humans, the Earth was covered by sea," because we understand the separate words—"Earth," "sea" etc., in virtue of knowing how to confirm other sentences in which these words are used, and because we understand the form of the sentence for the same reason.

And then it became evident to some of us that physicists do not always use words in their literal sense, but sometimes they use them in analogical or metaphorical senses. They tell us, for example, that photons, electrons and protons are both "waves" and "particles." But in a literal sense that cannot be

so—a wave is a disturbance in a medium (when the wave moves through the medium only energy moves through the medium), whereas a particle is a chunk of matter which moves. So physics is using these words “wave” and “particle” in analogical or metaphorical senses.

A logical positivism recognised only the immediate sensory and material world, it was inevitably hostile to religion. Indeed, A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* had a brief but well-known chapter claiming that ethical and theological utterances were, strictly speaking, not false but meaningless. And so, of course, Christian philosophers had no sympathy for logical positivism. But a second edition of *Language, Truth and Logic* in 1946 began with the words, “In the ten years that have passed since *Language, Truth and Logic* was first published, I have come to see that the questions with which it deals are not in all respects so simple as it makes them appear.” And as logical positivism began to develop into modern Anglo-American philosophy so it became less evidently hostile to religion, and Christian philosophers began to see virtues in it. When the positivists insisted only on the modified form of the verification principle—that to be meaningful a statement must be such that some evidence could make it to some extent probable—Christian philosophers began to claim that religious affirmations also satisfied the principle. Perhaps religious experience could support religious claims, or the general features of the world provide some (corrigible) evidence for the existence of God. And if a proposition has a meaning if the words which are used in the sentence which expresses it are used also in sentences which we know how to confirm, maybe those words with the help of which we try to explain what God is like—“omnipotent,” “omniscient,” and so on, have a meaning by reason of being defined by ordinary words such as “able to do anything” or “knows everything,” words which derive their sense from their role in ordinary sentences such as “I am able to speak” or “he knows grammar.” And if physics can legitimately use words in analogical and metaphorical senses to describe a reality lying beyond what we can observe, it follows that theology can do the same.

Thinking along these lines, a number of teachers in philosophy faculties in Britain and America (not, I emphasize, theology faculties) who were Christians (both Protestant and Catholic) began to think that the philosophical tradition founded on the physical sciences which contemporaries value so highly, could be our ally and not our enemy. And so working in the spirit of Anglo-American philosophy, some of us saw it as our task to clarify what it means to say “God exists,” or what the central doctrines of Christianity mean, in such clear and precise words, explaining which words were being used in a literal sense and which were being used in a metaphorical sense, that even atheists would have to admit that the Christian creed expressed a clear world-view. For example, we express our faith that God is “omnipotent.” But does that mean that he can make me exist and not exist at the same time? Surely

not. So we define God being “omnipotent” as his ability to do everything the description of which does not involve an internal contradiction. But does that mean that he can act so as to ensure that the Roman emperor Augustus never existed. That task seems not to involve an internal contradiction—God could have acted three thousand years ago so as to bring about that effect. But he cannot so act now—it seems to me—because it is logically impossible to act at one time so as to bring about an effect at an earlier time. (In this lies the internal contradiction.) And so we must say that God is “omnipotent” in the sense that he can do everything, the description of which contains no internal contradiction, and which is compatible with what has already happened.

From one point of view the statement that God cannot do what is logically impossible is misleading, because it gives the impression that God is weak—there is something which he cannot do. However, the weakness is not in God but in the English sentence. The expression “make me exist and not exist at the same time” may seem to designate an act, but in reality it is “meaningless” in the sense that no act would count as an act of that type. God can do everything (perform every act), but not all combinations of words designate acts.

It seems evident that various expressions in the Nicene Creed use words in a metaphorical sense, and especially those expressions which are connected with the theme of our conference do this—we express our faith in “the Son of God,” “begotten of the Father.” But in a literal sense the first person of the Trinity is not the “father” of the second—he did not beget him as a result of sexual intercourse. But, just as we seek the meaning of the physicist’s affirmation that electrons are “waves” (although to some degree they behave like particles), by seeking similarities between the behaviour of a water wave and the postulated behaviour of an electron, in the same way we look for similarities between the relation of a human father to his son and the postulated relation of the first person of the Trinity to the second. We suppose that “wave” and “father” designate something with those resembling features and also other resembling features of which we have not yet thought, but which does not have the postulated differences (between a wave and an electron, and a human father and the first person of the Trinity.) The similarities which are postulated between the first person of the Trinity and a human father are the following: a human father, like the first person of the Trinity is the source of the existence of his son, and (if a proper father) cares for, inspires, and loves his son.

My own first major book on the philosophy of religion, *The Coherence of Theism*, sought to provide an analysis of what is meant by “God,” an analysis which—I hoped—would make clear to the atheist that to say that God is omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good and so on, have clear meanings (although to some extent it is necessary to understand some of the words in analogical senses). A recent book of mine, *The Christian God*, was concerned

with the meaning of Christian doctrines, such as, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the 1970s Anglo-American philosophers moved on from interest in the question of which sentences were meaningful to the enterprise of creating a general metaphysical world-view, taking full cognizance of the detailed results of the physical and biological sciences. In general, the view they developed was a materialist one—there are, they held, only material objects with their physical properties. But I stress “on the whole,” for there are all kinds of diverse views. There are dualists who hold that the mind is completely separate from the body; there are philosophers who believe that there are eternal moral truths quite independent of human views or the development of human society, and there are even philosophers who believe in the existence of Universals. The spirit of this movement is a realist one, and a long way away from “postmodernism.”

Philosophers of religion also moved on to the question of the justification of religious faith, but there developed two very different approaches to this question. First, there is the approach of Alvin Plantinga. He has argued over many years that “there is a God” might be, in his terminology, a “properly basic belief.” Among our beliefs there are those which we believe, not because they are supported by other beliefs, but because they seem to us evidently true, for example, as a result of perception or memory. My belief that Quantum Theory is true is not a basic belief. If I am a physicist, I believe it because I believe that certain experiments have had certain results and that these are evidence for Quantum Theory; they make it probable that Quantum Theory is true. Or, if I am not a physicist, I believe it because I have read in a book that modern physicists have shown that it is true. But my belief that I have read it in a book is a basic belief; there are no other beliefs of mine which make it probable that I have read it in a book—I just believe that I have read it in a book—(it seems to me that I remember this.) Similarly, our beliefs about what we are now seeing, or our simple beliefs of logic or arithmetic (for example, that $2 + 2 = 4$) are basic beliefs. They are also, it is plausible to hold, “properly” basic beliefs in the sense that we are justified in believing them. They may not be true, but it is rational for us to believe them, until we get grounds for supposing that they are false, grounds provided by other beliefs (either basic beliefs, or beliefs supported by basic beliefs.) If you acquire beliefs which tend to undermine your basic belief, then you have to weigh the beliefs against each other. If three people tell you that your memory is badly mistaken on some point, you’d need a very strong conviction that your memory belief is true in order to be justified in continuing to hold the belief.

Plantinga then claims that *There is a God* is, for many of us who believe it, a basic belief, and he also claims that no one has shown that we are not justified in taking *There is a God* as a basic belief (if we find ourselves with

such a belief), and he believes that it does often play that role.¹ Plantinga acknowledges that in theory a believer could find arguments tending to show that there is no God, but he insists that it would need a powerful argument to make the average believer no longer justified in believing that there is a God.

Now Plantinga is surely right in supposing that many religious believers do have some sort of religious experience which gives them a basic belief that there is a God. And if they are unaware of any objections to religious belief, they are surely justified in continuing to hold that belief. But in my view in the modern world, both in the West and in Russia, almost all believers are aware of serious objections to religious belief. They are aware, for example, of the problem of evil. Or, to focus on the topic of this conference, it may seem to them that the doctrine of the Trinity is internally inconsistent. Now, if we have a very strong basic belief, that might justify us in continuing to hold that belief despite these objections, even if we cannot say what is wrong with them. However, in my view, relatively few religious believers have such strong religious beliefs formed by religious experience, so that they have a similar justification for ignoring the serious objections to religious belief. We must meet these objections and/or give positive arguments for the truth of religious belief, in order that their faith may be a justified one.

Further, Christianity is a missionary religion. We seek to convert the atheist. That means helping the atheist to see that there is a God and that the other Christian dogmas are true. To show the atheist that there is a God means giving arguments for the existence of God. These arguments may be very simple ones—"See how Christians live. They could not live in such a heroic way without God's help"—or more philosophical ones. And arguments too are needed to convert the Jew or the Muslim to Christianity. To give arguments to your interlocutor means treating him as a creature to whom God has given the gift of reason. And in order to convince him, these arguments must take off from what seems evident to your interlocutor. I quote Gregory of Nyssa:

Not that the same method of instruction will be suitable in the case of all who approach the Word ... the method of recovery must be adapted to the form of the disease ... [It] is necessary to regard the opinions which the persons have taken up, and so frame your argument in the accordance with the error into which each have fallen, by advancing in each discussion certain principles and reasonable propositions, that thus, through what is agreed on both sides, the truth may conclusively be brought to light. Should [your opponent] say there is no God, then, from the consideration of the skilful and wise economy of the Universe he will be brought to acknowledge that there is a certain overmastering power manifested through these channels.²

To give arguments for the existence of God, which begin from phenomena evident to all means to do natural theology, and many Christian theologians over the course of two millennia have been natural theologians. I give as one example a theologian much respected in the Orthodox tradition,

St. John of Damascus. Chapter 3 of his *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, is entitled 'Proof that there is a God.' He argues that mutable created things require for their existence an uncreated source to sustain them, and that the orderly behaviour of material bodies requires a personal being to sustain that order. Theologians of the medieval West, as for example St. Thomas Aquinas, developed these simple and quick arguments into rigorous and lengthy ones. However, the arguments of the middle ages were based on the physics of the middle ages, and the understanding of scientific method current in the middle ages. It seems to me, as it would have seemed to Gregory of Nyssa, that we need arguments which take off from the opinions of our contemporaries and lead from them to God, both in order to strengthen the faith of the believer and to convert the atheist. The second approach to the question of the justification of religious faith, which differs from that of Plantinga, claims that we need arguments (simple arguments for simple people, complicated arguments for well-educated people), if we are to have a justified faith. In my own books I have developed such arguments.³

The form of such arguments for the existence of God is as follows: physicists, biologists, historians, detectives, observe data. They put forward a theory by means of which they try to explain why these data have occurred. Their theory is probably true in so far as (1) if the theory is true, there is reason to expect these data; (2) if the theory is false, there is no reason to expect these data; (3) the theory is a simple one (at any rate, in comparison with other theories). The data of natural theology are the following: The existence of the Universe, its being governed by natural laws, these laws being such as to lead to the evolution of human beings, and these beings being conscious beings (that is, they have thoughts, beliefs, feelings and intentions). If God exists, since by definition he is omnipotent, he has the power to bring about all this; and since he is all-good, he has reason to do so. It is good that there should exist human beings with free will to choose between good and evil, able through their choices to make a difference to the Earth, the animals, themselves and each other. For this purpose they need to be conscious and to live in a Universe, where as a result of the operation of simple laws their choices will have predictable effects. If things did not behave in predictable ways codifiable by natural laws, we could never make any differences to the world—our actions would have no effects; only because there are laws of biology, can I produce food to eat by sowing seeds and watering plants. But if there is no God, there is no reason to expect there to be a Universe at all, let alone one governed by simple laws, let alone one in which the initial state is such and the laws are such as to lead to the evolution of humans, let alone those humans having a conscious life associated with their brains. That there is a God is a simple theory in the sense that the theory postulates one being, without any limits on the qualities needed for the existence of a personal being. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly free, and perfectly good.

Hence the data make it probable that there is a God.

In explaining the development of Anglo-American philosophy of religion, I have in the main spoken of its approach to the central theistic affirmation—that there is a God. In recent years Anglo-American philosophers of religion have begun to analyse the meaning and justification of other Christian doctrines, including the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

All theologians over the course of two millennia who have attempted to explain the meaning of this doctrine have either begun from the existence of one God and then tried to explain in what sense the Trinity belongs to his nature, or have begun from the existence of three divine persons (or, more precisely, from the existence of the first person who produced the other two persons) and then tried to explain in what sense these three persons constitute one God. The former theologians are in danger of being accused of modalism, the latter are in danger of being accused of tritheism. You will hear in this conference from the Anglo-American lecturers examples of both approaches to this topic. Of course, no one can understand the inner nature of God, but the Church demands from her members faith—and that means not merely faith that the English sentence “there is one God, but three divine persons” has some sense or other (we do not know what). For if such a faith were sufficient, it would be enough to recite the creed in Greek even if no one understood Greek any longer. Rather, the Church demands faith in the proposition which that sentence expresses, and for that we need to understand the meaning of the proposition, to understand to however small a degree (to use Orthodox terminology) the energies of God, which follow from his essence.

Although almost all the Anglo-American lectures in the present conference are concerned mainly with clarifying the doctrine of the Trinity, in the end this doctrine requires justification. There are those who consider that this doctrine is a properly basic belief, and there are those who consider that we need arguments in defence of this doctrine. There are available arguments of two kinds. First, there are arguments of pure reason, such, for example, as the argument that the Father would not be perfect love unless he produced a second divine person whom he could love perfectly,⁴ and also a third in order that the love of the Father and the Son should not be concentrated solely on themselves.⁵ And then there are arguments that this doctrine has been revealed in the Bible and Church teaching. This argument needs to be backed up by an argument that the Bible and Church teaching are the word of God.

In my view the latter argument will appeal centrally to the historical evidence of the nature of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ—it being such as (in so far as we can judge) God would live and teach if he became incarnate. From that we can infer that other parts of his teaching about whose truth we cannot judge for ourselves are also true. The argument will also appeal to the historical evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as a

super-miracle which God alone can perform and by which he authenticated that life and teaching and also the teaching of the Church which Jesus Christ founded.

The Anglo-American participants in this conference disagree with each other about many philosophical issues, but they are all Christians and almost all in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition in using the detailed results about argument, knowledge, probability and evidence developed by Anglo-American writers on other areas of philosophy, and showing sensitivity to (though not unquestioning acceptance of) what modern science tells us.

We are looking for lectures from the Russian side on the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, and on the most important theme of all, the role of the Trinity in prayer and divine worship.

NOTES

¹ See for example his “Reason and Belief in God” in (ed.) A. Plantinga and N. Wolterstorff, *Faith and Rationality*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

² St. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechism*, Prologue. (Trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson, in *Selected Writings of Gregory of Nyssa*, Parker and Co., Oxford, 1893).

³ See my *The Existence of God*, revised edition, Clarendon Press, 1991; and the shorter *Is There a God?*, Oxford University Press, 1996. Peter Forrest has a somewhat similar approach in his, *God Without the Supernatural*, Cornell University Press, 1996.

⁴ St. Augustine wrote with regard to the Father begetting the Son: “*Si voluit et non potuit, infirmus est; si potuit et non voluit, invidus est*” “if he wished to and could not, he is weak; if he could but did not wish to, he is envious.” (*De diversis Quaestionibus* 83.q50).

⁵ For an explicit argument for why there need to be three, and only three, divine persons, we have to wait until Richard of St Victor in the twelfth century. He argued that perfect loving of a second by a first individual involves a third individual, the loving of whom could be shared with the second. To take an analogy, there is something selfish in a marriage in which the spouses do not use their love for each other to love someone else (paradigmatically, a child). The Father, wrote Richard, needs *socium et condilectum* (an ally and one fellow-loved) in his loving. He wrote also anyone who really loves will seek the good of the beloved both by finding someone else for him to love and (by the same act) finding someone else for him to be loved by. These demands will be fully satisfied by three persons, and hence there is no need for a fourth divine person in order that love may be fully manifested. See Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 3.14 and 3.15.

THE TRINITARIAN DILEMMA

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In recent years, many resourceful thinkers have brought a new clarity to the issues surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity. Two incompatible families of trinitarian doctrine have been clearly distinguished: Social Trinitarianism and Latin Trinitarianism. I argue here that no theory in either camp evades the triune pitfalls of inconsistency, unintelligibility, and poor fit with the Bible. These two main approaches appear to be hopeless, and I argue that appeals to “mystery” are no way to avoid the difficulties at hand. Thus, the trinitarian project is as yet unfinished.

“It is a well known fact, amply borne out by the history of the discussion of the topic, that as soon as one goes beyond the automatic recital of traditional creedal phrases one inevitably leans either in the direction of modalism—the “persons” are simply different aspects of the divine being and/or activity—or tritheism—there really are three Gods, albeit very intimately connected in some way.” (William Alston, “Swinburne and Christian theology,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 41 (1997): p. 54)

I. THREE PITFALLS AND AN INCONSISTENT TRIAD

The doctrine of the Trinity has a long and interesting history. This long discussion is fundamentally an attempt to make sense of what the New Testament says about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, together with what the Old Testament says about the God of Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and the rest. In this paper I will avoid as much of this post-biblical tradition as I can, along with its Latin and Greek terminology. I do this not out of disrespect, lack of interest, or a mistaken belief that this history is irrelevant, but *only* because I want to focus on the most difficult philosophical problems facing various versions of the doctrine. I will use, as much as I can, contemporary

language, and will discuss only the very recent history of the doctrine. I want to focus on three problems which threaten trinitarian theories: inconsistency, unintelligibility, and poor fit with the Bible. Let us consider these in turn. Some trinitarian claims appear to be contradictory. This is a problem, for what is contradictory is also false. Others seem unintelligible. That is, one cannot understand what the speaker or writer is saying; she is using words, but for all one can tell, she is not really saying anything. Finally, some trinitarian claims seem to contradict or not fit well together with the clear teachings of the Bible. These are *apparent* problems for various versions of the doctrine. But are they *real* problems? Is there a doctrine of the Trinity which is consistent, intelligible, and scripturally kosher?

Consider the following six trinitarian claims.

1. God is divine.
2. The Father of Jesus Christ is divine.
3. The Son, Jesus Christ, is divine.
4. The Holy Spirit is divine.
5. The Father is not the Son is not the Holy Spirit is not God. That is, these four—Father, Son, Holy Spirit, God—are numerically distinct individuals.

This claim can be broken into two parts:

- 5a. These three are numerically distinct: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- 5b. God is numerically distinct from any of these: Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
6. Whatever is divine is identical to at least one of these: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit.¹

The word “God” here is a proper name, referring to that wonderful individual we meet in the Old Testament: Yahweh (“The LORD” in English translations, *YHWH* in Hebrew). The word “divine” has primary and secondary uses.² In the primary sense, the word “divine” refers to the property of being a divinity or being a god, some sort of supernatural personal being. In secondary senses, “divine” is used to describe things somehow related to or associated with things which are “divine” in the primary sense. Thus the church, the scriptures, angels, and various people may be called “divine.” According to the biblical writers, God is divine in the primary sense. Thus, if we accept their testimony, we must accept 1, understanding “divine” in this way. Various New Testament writings assert 2–4; each of the three Persons seems to have at least one property sufficient for being divine in some sense, such as existing “before” the world, being an uncreated creator of the world, and being worthy of worship, etc. 5 is a complicated claim that includes two parts. 5a is a datum of the New Testament. Things are true of the Son which are not true of the Father or the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Son is not the same individual as the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Son was sent by the Father, but the Father was not sent by the Father. The Son was crucified, but the

Father and Spirit were not. The Spirit was given to the church at Pentecost, but the Father and Son were not. For each of the three, there are things true of him which are not true of the other two. What about the last part of 5? 5b says that God is not identical to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit. This is *not* a datum of the New Testament, but is required by the popular Social version of trinitarian doctrine, to be discussed shortly. 6 also seems to be a datum of the New Testament. No other individual in those writings has properties sufficient to guarantee divinity. Those three—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have a special status and prominence there.

1–6 are an inconsistent set of claims. (More exactly, it is the set of 1, 5 and 6 which are inconsistent, but it will be useful to consider the entire group 1–6.) As a matter of logic, they *cannot* all be true; at least one of them has to be false. It's not hard to see why. 6 says that anything which is divine is identical to the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit (perhaps more than one). But 1 says that God is divine, and 5 says that he is not identical to any of those other three divine persons.

On the face of it, on scriptural grounds a Christian must believe every proposition but 5, which has an extra-scriptural element, 5b. Thus, it seems a Christian ought to deny 5. If 5 is false, then at least two of those four names (God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit) are names of the same individual.³ Further, if 5a is implied by the scriptures, then it is 5b which should be denied. If we affirm 5a and deny 5b, God must just be the same thing as exactly one of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Again, since none of those three name the same one thing, if God is identical to one, he thereby is *not* identical to the other two: they will be numerically different, yet intimately related and qualitatively similar individuals.

At least one of 1, 5 and 6 must go. I have all too briefly argued that we should reject 5, because of 5b. There are, of course, other strategies to consider: rejecting 1, rejecting 6, or rejecting *both* 1 and 6. Any one of these moves allows one to consistently believe 2–5. As a matter of fact, the two main approaches to the Trinity in the literature of the last thirty years always, as far as I can tell, jettison 1 and/or 6, whether or not they affirm 5.

II. SOCIAL TRINITARIANISM

The two most popular approaches to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity are standardly called Latin Trinitarianism (LT) and Social Trinitarianism (ST). Only ST implies 5, so we will examine it first. Like many, I was introduced to ST by the fine work of the American theologian Cornelius Plantinga.⁴ I found it to be a breath of fresh air, for it clearly affirmed 5a. This seemed a good fit with my reading of the New Testament. According to ST, God—that is, the three-personed “Godhead”—is identical to a *community* of

divine persons. This community is composed of three different personal parts—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this way ST completely clears up the most obscure relations in traditional trinitarian theorizing: the relations between the individual persons (*no*, says ST, *they aren't identical*), and the relations between God and the persons collectively (God just is the collection of those three).⁵ 6 is also affirmed by many forms of ST. We'll consider a version below that denies 6.

How does ST imply 5b? This principle is self-evident: nothing is identical to one of its proper parts. If any *x* is composed of three different proper parts, *a*, *b*, and *c*, then *x* is not identical to either *a*, *b*, or *c*.⁶ Therefore, if God is identical to this community, then he can't also be identical to one member of it, for instance the Holy Spirit. In sum, if ST is true, then 5 must also be true.

ST does *not* commit one to an inconsistent set of propositions (1–6 or 1, 5, 6); its proponents have anticipated and avoided this problem. Subtleties aside, according to most versions of ST, 1 is false. Whatever is divine in the primary sense is a person, a personal being. But according to ST, God is *not* a person, but a collection or set of persons. In the language of contemporary metaphysics, God is a *set* or *event* or *state of affairs*, not a *substance*. What is not a substance is not a person. What is not a person is not divine, not a divinity. Thus, God is not divine. Sadly, for all its lovely virtues, this seems to be the death of ST. An acceptable doctrine of the Trinity must be compatible with the scriptures, and the scriptures imply 1. Proponents of ST have described several ways one can talk and think about of God on their theory *as if* it were personal. They are right about this: we often do think of and speak of communities of persons as if they were persons. But in the end, communities are just not persons; they belong to the wrong metaphysical category. Several proponents of ST theories candidly admit this, accepting this as a price one must pay for a coherent trinitarianism. I agree that we need a consistent and intelligible metaphysics of those three wonderful persons in the New Testament, and that the main historical attempts, now classed as versions of LT, fail to give us this. But the Bible says that God is a personal being, and arguably, religious experience confirms this.

Some ST theorists will respond as follows. *Not so fast! We think there are three divine persons, and that God is composed of these. We also think that God is a person! How could we deny that?* In reply, such a person denies claim 6 above. She believes in a divine Quaternity, not in a divine Trinity. She might reply that God is a “person” in a different sense than the three components are “persons.” Until one spells out what this other sense of “person” is, one has a distinction without a difference, a merely verbal solution to the problem. Attempts to spell it out inevitably fall into one of two traps. First, this new talk of “persons” which are not personal beings in the normal sense may fail to be intelligible; it may be so much wind, though a

metaphysical and erudite wind. Second, the new definition of “person” may imply the old one, so that whatever is a person in the new sense must *also* be a person in the normal sense: a conscious being with intelligence and will. If that is so, the new conception of personhood may be intelligible but it will not be helpful; on this sort of account, one is still committed to 1–4. What is wrong with positing *four* beings which are divine persons in the *same* sense, so long as one is composed of the other three? The problem is this: in the New Testament, we encounter three divine and wonderful personal beings. In those pages there is no *additional* person called “God” or “the Godhead.” Many careful readers have noticed that in the New Testament “God” and “the Father” are almost always two names for one thing.⁷ They are used more or less interchangeably. The main exceptions to this are passages where the term “God” is applied descriptively to the Son of God. In such passages, the word “God” isn’t a name for the individual Yahweh, but is rather a descriptive term much like “divine,” which says something about what sort of being the Son is. Whatever basis there is for a *fourth* divine person, it isn’t the scriptures. To defend this claim I would have to do exegetical work that I can’t undertake here. In this short paper I will just say, let the reader check for herself.

Versions of ST are often derided as tritheism, and not monotheism at all. I think this objection is less serious than the one just given. As proponents of ST have remarked, on the face of it, it isn’t obvious that trinitarianism shouldn’t be understood as some special kind of tritheism. Also, defenders of ST respond that on their theory there are three divine beings, and yet there is also a being which is divine in a unique sense—either the Father or the community. If it is the Father who is uniquely divine, then many will object that the three persons are not equal at all, and that we instead have one “real” God and two “second-class” gods. This objection seems wrongheaded to me, if we assume that any trinitarian wants to say that “generation,” “procession,” or “begetting” relations obtain between the persons. Whatever these amount to exactly, they would seem to be an asymmetric ontological dependence relation, and so if any person generates (etc.) another, in *some* sense the two will be ontologically unequal. Thus I see no problem in ST theorists saying that the Father is uniquely divine. Of course, if it is the *community* which is uniquely “divine,” then one is using “divine” in a secondary sense. To say that the community is “divine” thus means that it is related to at least one divinity in some way, such as being composed of three of them. Such a community would be an interesting thing indeed, but it would not be the Yahweh we meet in the Old Testament, who is a unique, loving, all-powerful, faithful, and generous *divine person*.

ST theorists also reply to the tritheism charge by saying that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *not* three *independent* persons. This is an ambiguous claim. Is relational or ontological interdependence being asserted? ST theorists usually emphasize their relational interaction—their mutual love,

cooperation, intimate access to one another's thoughts, unity of will, and so on. All this, however true, is quite irrelevant. Three personal beings, no matter how close their personal relationship, do not *for that reason* compose a single person. More to the point are dark assertions about the *perichoresis* or "coinherence" or "mutual permeation" (etc.) of the three divine persons. The point of these claims, I take it, is that the three persons are somehow *ontologically or metaphysically* and not just relationally "mixed together" so to speak. These claims are unintelligible; *perichoresis*-talk seems firmly stuck at the metaphorical level. We imagine spatial coincidence or perhaps chemical combination, but these are surely not what they are trying to assert. Surely they don't mean to suggest that the three persons share a common stuff or matter, or that their three portions of matter overlap. One suspects that all proponents mean by "*perichoresis*" in this context is "*whatever it is* which makes divine persons combine to make a further person." If they have more in mind than this, they must answer the following question: Even if it is true that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "metaphysically interpenetrate" (whatever this means) why do they *for that reason* constitute a fourth person? That is, exactly what is it about *perichoresis* that makes this so?

In sum, there are two ways that ST theories respond to the problem of this paper. Some versions commit to 2–6 and deny 1. But we have roughly the same grounds for believing 1 as we do for believing 2–4: the biblical writers, inspired by God, tell us these things. To deny 1 is to claim that the biblical writers are badly mistaken about the nature of Yahweh. Alternately, ST may embrace 1–5 and deny 6, at the price of unintelligibility and running against the grain of the New Testament by proposing a Quaternity. Either way, ST is an unappealing metaphysics of God.

III. LATIN TRINITARIANISM

What about the other kind of trinitarian theory, LT, which is certainly closer to the historical tradition, at least in the Latin West? Any form of LT denies the ST claim that God is at bottom a community of divine persons. How does LT respond to the problem of this paper? One must distinguish, I think, between what I'll call *popular LT* and *refined LT*. Popular LT denies 5. They don't then rest content with merely 1–4 and 6, an obviously consistent set of claims. They would substitute something else for 5. One such replacement is represented in a famous trinitarian diagram.



Why exactly is 5 false, on this way of thinking? It is false because the Son is identical to God, the Father is identical to God, the Spirit is identical to God, and yet none of those three persons are identical to one another. The threefold distinction “in” God is real, not conceptual—there is in God himself, and not merely in our thinking about him, a three-fold division of persons, according to any form of LT. Accordingly, 5 should be replaced with:

5': The Father is identical to God, the Son is identical to God, and the Holy Spirit is identical to God, but the Father is not identical to the Son, the Son is not identical to the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not identical to the Father.⁸ In other words, these three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are each numerically identical to God, but are numerically distinct from one another. We can read this in the above picture if we interpret the “is” there as an “is” of identification.

Having done this, we still don’t have a consistent set of trinitarian claims; this time the contradiction is within a single premise! All of 1–6 can’t be true because 5' is a contradiction, and so a necessary falsehood. By its very structure, it is false, because the identity relation ($=$) is transitive. For any a , b , and c whatever, if $a=b$, and $b=c$, then $a=c$. By this rule of inference, it follows from 5' that the Father is the Son, the Son is the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is the Father, all of which are expressly denied in 5'. In other words, 5' is equivalent to this statement: “The Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and God are just one thing, *and* they are not.”

The common expedient to get around this problem is a strong dose of *modalism*, the claim that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one individual, God.⁹ This temptation stares back at us in the above diagram; we see one personal being with three faces, three ways of presenting itself and relating to the world. (In contrast, ST is more in line with the traditions in Christian art of drawing the Godhead as three men, or as two men and a dove.) Modalism has no problems with consistency and intelligibility, but it fails badly as a way to read the New Testament. If modalism were true, it would be a mistake to think that the Father and the Son have a wonderful, loving, cooperative personal relationship. Rather, what we see in the gospels would really amount to a single individual (God) talking to, relating to, and cooperating *with himself* in different roles, much as a human suffering from multiple personality disorder or a very versatile actor does. This is a terrible reading of the New Testament, which is why nearly all Christians have always (at least in their clear-headed moments) rejected modalism. The trinitarian interactions therein are not to be thought of as divine delusion, pretending, or deceit.

We've seen that popular LT and modalism are unacceptable. But what about *refined* LT? In one version, the logical prowess of contemporary English language analytic philosophy rides to the rescue of LT. A number of philosophers have shown that trinitarian statements can be interpreted so as to form a consistent set of claims. One merely has to deny that there is any such relation as identity (=).¹⁰ They replace 5 with this:

5" Each divine person (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is *the same god as* the others, but is not *the same person as* the others.

Questions of numerical identity are ruled out as meaningless or wrong-headed. The only kind of identity there is, on the theory of relative identity, is identity relative to a kind of thing. Unfortunately, the theory of relative identity is false, for it is self-evident that there is such a relation as identity. We can think and talk about individual things such as ourselves, each other, and objects in the world, and concerning each of those things, it is evident that it is identical to itself. What is identity? It is "the only relation that everything has to itself and nothing has to anything else."¹¹ Everyone both grasps what the identity relation is and knows that it obtains in reality. But suppose that the relative identity trinitarian grants that there is a coherent notion of (non-relative) identity, but nonetheless claims that there are irreducible relations of relative identity¹² such as *same person as*, and that two non-identical things can be the same (some kind of thing) and yet different (some other kind of thing), as in 5". There are at least two problems with these sorts of claims. First, they are unintelligible. What does it mean to say, for example, that the Son is "the same god as" the Father, but not the same person as the Father? Isn't a god, a divine being, just a very special kind of personal being? The more one reflects on 5", the harder it is to see what it means. No philosopher has given a convincing example of two things which are the same (some kind

of thing) but not the same (some other kind of thing). One would be incredulous if told, for example, that John and Peter were the same apostle but different men, or that Rover and Spot were the same mammal but different dogs. Why should one be less incredulous at claims like 5", or the claim that the Son is the same being as, but a different person than the Father? It seems that this sort of refined LT is to attempt to illuminate the obscure by the obscure.¹³ Developments of relative identity logics do nothing to remedy this; such logics, like many others, seem to have no application to reality. For instance, suppose we could state trinitarian claims consistently in a four-valued logic. This would be little comfort, because no one can make sense of the theory that claims can be true, false, ____, or ____ (where something akin to truth and falsehood fills these two blanks). At best, this sort of refined LT can give us a version of internally consistent trinitarian claims, but it does so at the price of unintelligibility.

There have been other attempts to formulate a refined LT, but I won't discuss them here. I will only note that the problem for LT has always been to say something intelligible and consistent without falling into modalism. I am not aware of any version of refined LT which achieves this.

IV. CONCLUSION

Where does this leave us? The trinitarian dilemma is that we can't ignore the problems facing the doctrine, and yet it would appear that our best minds have not solved these problems. Thanks to hard, careful and honest work by a number of Christian philosophers and theologians in recent years, both ST and LT now look unpromising. Some Christians believe that unintelligibility, inconsistency, and poor fit with the Bible are *good* features of some (usually their own) form of trinitarianism. To such people I would suggest a look at the recent LT and ST literature, or perhaps anti-trinitarian literature from Jewish, Muslim, or Unitarian sources.

Even after one appreciates these problems and tries to address them, there is an almost irresistible temptation in trinitarian theorizing to spin a vice as a virtue. One hears protests like this: *The doctrine is supposed to be a mystery. It shouldn't be intelligible and ought to appear contradictory to our puny minds—we're dealing with the transcendent source of all being!*

While I acknowledge that we will eventually encounter our cognitive limits if we think hard about God, I suggest that we Christian philosophers would not and should not accept this sort of behavior from members of other religions defending *their* distinctive theses about God, Brahman, the Absolute, Nirvana, etc. Why should we indulge in the thought that our obscurity is laudable, while theirs is not? Further, we shouldn't expect any

non-Christians to be impressed, much less convinced by this kind of endorsement of the obscure.

In a sense that everyone really familiar with the issue understands, full-blown doctrines of the Trinity are not at all data of the New Testament, but are rather the product of serious, careful efforts to understand what is there. We Christian theologians and philosophers came up with the metaphysical/theological doctrine of the Trinity; perhaps with God's help we will come up with a better version of it. The most one can say is that trinitarian thinking is *presently* stuck with the sorts of problems we've been discussing. It is often suggested, but rarely argued, that these problems are unavoidable and permanent, at least in this life. I can't see why anyone ought to believe this. Perhaps there are other explanations for our failure to avoid all three problems at once. Perhaps someone will, or perhaps someone in the more distant past already has found a way to avoid all three.

Let us conclude by revisiting our six trinitarian claims. 1, 5 and 6 are an inconsistent triad; one can consistently affirm any two but not all three claims. Extant forms of trinitarianism deny 1 or 6 or both. But on the plausible assumption that every claim but 5 is required by the Christian scriptures, 5 must go. There are materials left (1–4, 6) for a different kind of trinitarian theory, whatever we replace 5 with. It will have much in common with traditional theories, except that it will exclude 5, 5' and 5". Whatever we come up won't be a version of ST, because it will affirm both 1 and 6. I believe that there is a doctrine of the Trinity which is consistent, intelligible, and scripturally kosher. But that is a story for another day.¹⁴

NOTES

¹ In contemporary logical symbolism:

1. Dg

2. Df

3. Ds

4. Dh

5. $f \neq s \neq h \neq g$ (That is, $f \neq s \wedge s \neq h \wedge f \neq h \wedge f \neq g \wedge s \neq g \wedge h \neq g$.)

5a. $f \neq s \wedge s \neq h \wedge f \neq h$

5b. $f \neq g \wedge s \neq g \wedge h \neq g$

6. $\forall x (Dx \supset (x = f \vee x = s \vee x = h))$

5 is compatible with $g = \{f, s, h\}$, the claim that God is identical to *the set of* Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

² Also, “divine” is used to refer to the property of being identical to Yahweh. To avoid confusion, I’ll avoid this usage in this paper.

³ More precisely, if one denies 5, one is thereby committed to this claim: $f = s \vee s = h \vee f = h \vee f = g \vee s = g \vee h = g$.

⁴ Cornelius Plantinga “Gregory of Nyssa and the social analogy of the Trinity,” *The Thomist*, 50 (1986), 325–352, “The threeness/oneness problem of the Trinity,” *Calvin Theological Journal*, 23 (1988), 37–53; “Social Trinity and tritheism” in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (eds.) *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21–47.

⁵ That is, $g = \{f, s, h\}$. There are also some interesting and more difficult to explain dependence relations between the three persons, and some ST theorists have given appealing accounts of these as well.

⁶ It is irrelevant whether x is identical to the set $\{a, b, c\}$. 5 neither says nor denies that $g = \{f, s, h\}$.

⁷ This one being (Yahweh) is also picked out by the phrase “the God,” “the only God,” and various other phrases. See Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, Wherein Every Text in the New Testament Relating to That Doctrine Is Distinctly Considered; and the Divinity of Our Blessed Saviour, According to the Scriptures, Proved and Explained* in John Clarke (ed.) *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D.D., Late Rector of St. James’s Westminster; in Four Volumes 3rd ed.* (London: John and Paul Knapton, 1738), chapter 1, sections 1–3.

⁸ $f = g \wedge s = g \wedge h = g \wedge f \neq s \wedge s \neq h \wedge h \neq f$.

⁹ That is: $f = s = h = g$. As I use the term, a “modalist” need not claim that God exists as or plays the role of Father, Son, and Spirit serially, one after the other.

¹⁰ Some explorations of this doctrine are: Peter T. Geach “Identity” in Peter T. Geach (ed.) *Logic Matters* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1972), 238–247; A. P. Martinich “God, emperor and relative identity,” *Franciscan Studies*, 39 (1979), 180–191; Peter van Inwagen “And yet they are not three gods but one God” in Peter van Inwagen (ed.) *God, Knowledge, and Mystery* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 222–259; Peter van Inwagen “Trinity” in Edward Craig (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Version 1.0 (New York: Routledge, 1998); Peter van Inwagen “Three Persons in One Being.” The best objections I am aware of to the doctrine of relative identity in general and applied to the trinity are in: Richard Cartwright “On the logical problem of the Trinity” in Richard Cartwright (ed.) *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987), 187–200; E. J. Lowe *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of Sortal Terms* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989); William P. Alston and Jonathan Bennett “Identity and Cardinality: Geach and Frege,” *The Philosophical Review*, 93 (1984), 553–567.

¹¹ Alston and Bennett “Identity and Cardinality,” 559–560.

¹² That is, a sentence of the form “ s is the same k as p ” is *not* to be understood as asserting: “ s is a k , and p is a k , and $s = p$.”

¹³ For his part, Peter van Inwagen is not trying to illuminate the doctrine at all, but is only trying to state it in a non-contradictory way. His view is that it must be a “mystery” in this life, i.e. something which seems impossible. (*God, Knowledge, and Mystery*, 219, 259.)

¹⁴ My thanks to Stephen T. Davis, Edward Feser, William Hasker, Brian Leftow, Richard Swinburne, Charles Taliaferro, Ed Wierenga, and Nicholas Wolterstorff for their helpful comments on various drafts of this paper. A longer version of this paper appears as “The Unfinished Business of Trinitarian Theorizing” in *Religious Studies*, 2003.

PERICHORETIC MONOTHEISM: A DEFENSE OF A SOCIAL THEORY OF THE TRINITY

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This essay is a defense of one version of the so-called Social Theory of the Trinity (ST), a version that emphasizes the notion of *perichoresis*. It offers an *a priori* argument in favor of ST, and defends the theory against four criticisms that have recently been raised against it by Professor Brian Leftow: (1) that ST amounts to tritheism; (2) that on ST there is no way to answer the question, “How many Gods are compatible with monotheism?”; (3) that ST raises the specter of inequality among the persons; and (4) that co-mingled divine minds cannot be distinct.

I

This essay defends one version of the so-called Social Theory of the Trinity (ST). Let me begin with an overview of the paper’s structure. After dealing with introductory issues, I define ST, contrasting it with the so-called Latin Theory of the Trinity (LT). I then present an *a priori* argument in favor of ST and defend the argument against objections. Next I explain in more detail the version of ST that I wish to defend. Finally, I reply to objections that have recently been raised against ST by Brian Leftow.¹

I consider ST to be a valid option for Christians. That is, I believe the theory can be shown to be both defensible and orthodox. To try to establish this point is one of this essay’s two central aims. The other is to show that, despite appearances, LT and ST (or at least the version of ST that I defend) end up differing only slightly.

The belief that the one and only God exists as three distinct and coequal persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is one of the defining doctrines of the Christian faith. Christians are not polytheists—we do not believe in three Gods. Nor do we believe, as Moslems do, in a simple, undifferentiated

monotheism. We are Trinitarians. We believe that God is three-in-one. To borrow the classical terminology, we hold that God is three Persons in one essence.

Here is a brief statement of the doctrine from one of its more powerful ancient defenders, viz., Augustine of Hippo:

There are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and each is God, and at the same time all are one God; and each of them is a full substance, and at the same time all are one substance. The Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; the Son is neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. But the Father is the Father uniquely; the Son is the Son uniquely; and the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit uniquely. All three have the same eternity, the same immutability, the same majesty, and the same power.²

The doctrine says in sum that the one God exists in three distinct and coequal persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three Persons are not three Gods, or even three parts or aspects of God, but one God. No Person is subordinate to any other; all are co-equally and co-eternally divine.

Contemporary people face several problems in trying to appreciate the doctrine of the Trinity. One obstacle is the venerable metaphysical terminology traditionally used to express it. This terminology is all the more confusing because it was used somewhat fluidly until the end of the fourth century, when the various technical christological and trinitarian formulas were largely fixed, although the meanings of some crucial terms were still debated (especially “person”) and developed further. The *oneness* of God has traditionally been expressed either by means of the Greek word *ousia* (substance, essence, in this case deity or Godhead) or the Latin word *substantia* (which is the Latin equivalent to *ousia*). These terms are usually translated into English (in this context) as “substance.” That is, Christians claim that the members of the Trinity have one substance or essential divine nature. (Augustine, who waffles in Trinitarian terminology from one context to another, expresses himself differently in the passage cited above; he there uses the word “substance” to describe the threeness as well as the oneness.) The *threeness* of God was expressed by the Greek fathers by means of the term *hypostasis* (sometimes *prosopon*) and by the Latin fathers by means of the term *persona*. So the Trinity is described in the East by the phrase, “three hypostases in one *ousia*,”³ and in Latin Christianity by the phrase, “three persons in one substance.” Both East and West agree that there are three Persons in the Trinity, and that the Trinity is one God.

The Christian doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is often called a mystery. Christian theologians virtually with one voice have stressed this point. Accordingly, we can explain what the doctrine of the Trinity is (as I just briefly tried to do), but we cannot ever fully explain the Trinity. Given that the Trinity is a mystery, the words we use to describe it—including the words I just used—are signposts or pointers more than explanations. Our Trinitarian

language does make claims, of course; it is not just pictures or metaphors. Indeed, in this essay I will try to make true and explanatorily helpful statements about the Trinity. But given the mystery, it is best to see orthodox Trinitarian language as aiming us in the right direction by showing what can and cannot be said about God. No human explanation and no analogy drawn from human experience can ever fully capture the reality of God's being.

Orthodox Trinitarianism faces theological dangers in either direction. Pushing too hard on the oneness of God can lead to modalism, which is the theory that God is truly one but only seems to us or appears to us to be three; as God relates to human beings, God plays three roles. Pushing too hard on the threeness of God can lead to tritheism, which is the theory that the Trinity is three Gods who are perhaps unified in some ways. Both modalism and tritheism were condemned as heretical, and are to be avoided.

ST is one way of understanding the Trinity. In what I will call the "standard picture" of the early Trinitarian controversies, it is most closely associated with the Eastern Orthodox churches, and especially with the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Basil of Caesarea.⁴ It logically begins with and takes as basic the *threeness* of the Blessed Trinity. It also emphasizes the primacy of the Father as the "fount of divinity." The word "God" or "the Godhead" names the triune reality itself. So God is in some ways like a community or society. The three persons each possess the generic divine nature as an attribute, and so are all fully divine. In most versions of ST, they have distinct minds and wills. Indeed, something like this seems essential if the persons are to be in loving relationship with each other, which is one of the central *desiderata* of ST. It is important to note that ST is not a claim merely about what we now call the economic Trinity (e.g., that God *in God's relations to us* is three); the claim is that God in God's inner life is like a loving community. The great challenge facing ST is to make room for and explain the oneness of God, that is, to ensure that Christianity is monotheistic.

Although we will return to the question of whether ST is safely monotheistic in more detail below, I should say a word here about its usual strategy for coping with that question. The issue is this. Suppose that God is like a community, i.e., that there are three persons or subsistent centers of consciousness, will, and action in God. (Again, something like this seems to be required if God's inner life is to be relational, although later in the essay I will back away considerably from the visual image of three individuals that naturally springs to mind here.) If so, then how is it that God is *one* (as of course orthodoxy requires)? The answer, according to ST, is threefold: (1) Each of the Persons equally possesses the divine essence in its totality. (2) The three necessarily share a marvelous unity of purpose, will, and action; that is, it is not possible for them to disagree or to be in conflict. (3) They exist in *perichoresis* (circumincession, coinherence, permeation). That is,

each is “in” the others; each ontologically embraces the others; to be a divine person is by nature to be in relation to the other two; the boundaries between them are transparent; their love for and communion with each other is such that they can be said to “interpenetrate” each other.

It is important to note that ST affirms that God is something *like* a community. To say baldly that God *is* a community either embraces or at least comes dangerously near tri-theism. Three Gods who are unified in will and purpose is not orthodox Trinitarianism.

As noted, according to the standard picture, ST is set in contrast with the Western theory of the Trinity, which we are calling LT. This theory is associated most closely with Augustine, and especially his great work, *de Trinitate*. (I do not want to be seen as interpreting Augustine in this brief summary of LT, however.) LT logically begins with and takes as basic the *oneness* of the Blessed Trinity. LT stresses the claim that there is but one divine being or substance, and it is God. God does exist in three persons, and the persons are genuine distinctions within the Godhead (and thus Modalism is avoided); but all three are simply God. The three persons have the same divine nature, but there is one and only one case or instance of God. While on ST (as Leftow would have it⁵) the persons are both distinct and discrete, on LT the persons are distinct but not discrete. The great challenge for LT (which we will not explore in any detail in this chapter) is to make room for and explain the threeness of God, i.e., avoid modalism.

It should be noted that the way in which I have just distinguished between the East and the West—the “standard picture”—has recently been called into question.⁶ The Cappadocians stressed the oneness as much as did Augustine—so the revisionists claim—and Augustine stressed the threeness as much as did the Cappadocians. The East and West continued to have mutually fertilizing contacts and conversations; right up until the Photian schism of A.D. 863 it was entirely possible to see their Trinitarian views as compatible. But whether the disjunctive paradigm of the standard picture is historically accurate will not ultimately matter for the purposes of this paper. There definitely is a disjunction in contemporary theological and philosophical discussions of the Trinity, with people like Richard Swinburne, Cornelius Plantinga, and Edward Wierenga⁷ defending ST and people like Kelly James Clark and Brian Leftow⁸ defending LT. But part of my aim here is to show how the two emphases captured by what I am calling ST and LT can be unified, or at least nearly so.

I should close this section by explaining exactly how LT and ST differ. As I see it, there are three central differences: (1) As noted, LT begins with, and takes as basic the oneness of God, while ST begins with, and takes as basic the threeness of God. (2) On ST the Persons are robust—robust enough to constitute a genuine “other”; they are three centers of consciousness, will, and action. (God is like a community, but because of *perichoresis* cannot be

said to *be* a community, as we will see.) On LT the Persons are not robust; there are three distinct Persons all right, but they are not three separate centers of consciousness, will, and action; God is not like a community at all. (3) On ST the Persons share a universal nature (which we can call “divinity”) while on LT they share an individual nature (“God”). In other words, in ST the three Persons are all one kind of being, viz., God (of which there is but one instance), and so each is divine; while on ST the three Persons are all one individual being.

II

Here I offer a proof of ST. It is an *a priori* proof, based on the concept of love. There are seven steps. I will first state the argument by way of summary. Then I will distinguish my proof from three other related arguments in the history of theology. Finally, I will discuss each premise in turn. Here then is the argument:

- (1) Necessarily, God is perfect, and perfect in love (I John 4:8).
- (2) Necessarily, if God does not experience love of another, God is imperfect.
- (3) Therefore, necessarily, God experiences love of another. ((1), (2))
- (4) Necessarily, it is possible that only God exists (i.e., that God does not create).
- (5) Necessarily, if ST is false, there is no “other” in the Godhead.
- (6) Necessarily, if God alone exists, and if ST is false, then God does not experience love of another, and thus is not perfect. ((2), (4), (5))
- (7) Therefore, necessarily, ST is true. ((4), (6))

I make very little claim to originality with this proof. Indeed, in the tradition there are several *a priori* proofs based on the concept of love in favor of the divine threeness. For example, in book 9 of *De Trinitate*,⁹ Augustine argued that God is necessarily triune, since God is love—and love, consisting, as it must, of that which loves, that which is loved, and love itself—is necessarily triune. And in his own *De Trinitate*,¹⁰ Richard of St. Victor defined God as absolute love, power, and beatitude. If God were one person alone, God would have no fitting object of the divine love; if God were two persons, that too would be insufficient because there would be no sharing of love; there must then be three divine persons mutually to share the bliss of their love and so to complete their beatitude. Now since God is omnipotent, God can bring about whatever is necessary for divine beatitude, and so God is three persons.

And in our own day, Richard Swinburne similarly argues that God must be triune. Love is a supreme good, Swinburne says, and necessarily involves sharing, cooperating, and benefiting another. Two persons makes sharing possible, but only three or more allows cooperation in sharing. More than three is unnecessary because it is not essential to the fullest manifestation of love.¹¹ (The three arguments just noted are arguments in favor of divine threeness; my own argument in the present section of the paper is an argument in favor of divine plurality or community.¹²)

The premises of the proof require discussion.¹³ To begin, I take it that the first premise:

(1) Necessarily, God is perfect, and perfect in love (I John 4:8) must be acceptable to all Christians, both because of its scriptural warrant, and because virtually every theologian takes lovingness and perfection to be central defining characteristics of God. As such, I need not argue for its truth.

Premise (2) says:

(2) Necessarily, if God does not experience love of another, God is imperfect.

Now love of oneself is surely a good. Jesus' words, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:31), seem to imply or at least assume as much. And certainly Christians want to affirm that God loves himself. Still, it seems obvious (at least to me) that love of *another person* is also a very great good. It seems that a God who does not and cannot love another has missed out on something high and wonderful. There would be a deficiency in God. God would be less than perfect. (The same would be true of any great good that can logically be experienced by an omnipotent and perfectly good being: if God were not to experience beauty or justice, that would be a deficiency in God.) And so premise (2) is true. Premise (3) says:

(3) Therefore, necessarily, God experiences love of another.

This premise follows immediately from (2) and (3). If they are necessarily true, it is necessarily true.

Now let us turn to a different point. A question: Was God in God's timeless eternity or pre-creation state free *not* to create the heavens and the earth and the sentient creatures who would one day populate it? Some theologians in effect have said no. Following the "principle of plenitude" notion (as it was called by Arthur Lovejoy, in his classic *The Great Chain of Being*),¹⁴ they argue that God is essentially perfectly good, and that goodness is necessarily generous rather than jealous and allows all sorts of things and types of things to exist. Accordingly, God necessarily expresses himself in the act of creation. This principle originated with Plato (see *Timaeus* 29E), was developed further by Plotinus, and entered Christian theology through Augustine. Some theologians took the principle not only as an explanation of the existence of the creation itself, but also as an explanation of its great variety of living things. A universe containing an immense variety of kinds of

creatures, from the least to the most complex, was taken to be a better universe than one that is sparse, barren, and bereft of various sorts of creatures. A full, abundant, overflowing world is morally better than an empty or barren one. So a good God will create and will bestow the gift of existence as widely as possible.

The principle of plenitude is rarely invoked in Christian theology any more, and for good reason. For one thing, it is difficult to state precisely. Does it concern merely *kinds* of creatures, sheer *numbers* of creatures, or both? For another, no matter which way the principle is understood, we do not seem to inhabit a universe that exemplifies it. Both the number of things and the kinds of things in existence (or that have been or ever will be in existence) seems limited. It is easy to imagine all sorts of possible creatures who have never existed and doubtless never will—mermaids, unicorns, green tigers, seventy-foot tall moles. And we have no reason at all to think that all such creatures do indeed exist somewhere else in the universe.

More importantly, most Christian traditions have stressed the notion that creation is an unnecessitated act of grace on God's part. My own Reformed tradition—wanting, as it always does, to preserve the freedom of God—argues that God was indeed free not to create a world at all. That is, the question, “Why is there anything and not nothing?” (which is at the heart of all cosmological arguments for the existence of God) envisions a possibility—there eternally existing *only* God and nothing else—that was, until the moment of creation, a genuine possibility. God *could* (in some strong sense of the word “could”) have decided not to create at all. Thus:

(4) Necessarily, it is possible that only God exists (i.e., if God does not create).

Now had God actually chosen not to create, and were ST false, then God would have had no experience of “another,” no “other” (in the sense of a distinct center of conscious, will, and action) to love. Accordingly, God would not have experienced the great good of love of another, perhaps the highest form of love. This point follows because of premise (5), which says:

(5) Necessarily, if ST is false, there is no “other” in the Godhead. That is, on premise (4) it is quite possible that there might not have been any “other” for God to love (“other” in the sense of a separate center of consciousness, and will), and thus God would not be perfect, contrary to premise (1). Thus premise (6) explicitly says:

(6) Necessarily, if God alone exists, and if ST is false, then God does not experience love of another, and thus is not perfect.

A possible objection looms here: perhaps the high status that we grant to the notion of “loving another” depends on the envisioned “other” not being identical to the lover or not being metaphysically “within” the lover in some sense. That is, it depends on the lover and the one loved being both distinct and discrete. But that is precisely what we do not have (so the objection

continues) with ST's "Persons." There the love among the members of the Trinity is at least a sort of self-love. But this point does not appear decisive. The "Persons" in ST are robust; that, indeed, is the essence of the theory. It is true that the three Persons are not "other than God" but they are "other than each other" (as all orthodox Trinitarians insist). The intuited importance of love of another is accordingly relevant to ST.

Thus:

(7) Therefore, necessarily, ST is true.

This premise follows because ST, however unpacked, entails as noted that there are eternally differing robust individuals (possible objects of love) within the Godhead. QED.¹⁵

III

Before turning to Leftow's criticisms of ST, I will explain in more detail the version of ST that I wish to defend. There are three versions that Leftow criticizes—what he calls Trinity Monotheism (the one God is the Trinity itself), Group Mind Monotheism (the one God is the conscious sum of the three persons), and Functional Monotheism (the persons are one functionally). But my own version of ST, which I am calling Perichoretic Monotheism, differs from these three at important points.

Perichoretic Monotheism rests upon six claims, many of which are shared by other versions of ST (and indeed by other versions of Christian trinitarianism). There will be little that is particularly new or surprising here.

1. *God is like a community.* The three persons are three distinct centers of consciousness, will, and action. There are three instances or cases of divinity. (This language might be taken to sound like Tritheism, but points 1-6, taken together, ensure that it is not Tritheism.)

It would be best if I explain what I mean by the word "person," especially since this word is often left undefined and has been used variously in the history of theology (let alone philosophy). But let me first point out that in defining this term, I am not trying to exegete the work of any particular Trinitarian theologian, defender of ST or not. "Person" is one of those words that we use frequently but which defy rigorous definition. I will loosely define a person as "a conscious purposive agent." *Conscious* means that persons are things that engage in "mental" or "conscious" acts like thinking, feeling, loving, willing, believing, remembering, and knowing. *Purposive* means that persons are things that have desires, intentions, and aims; and they frequently set out to achieve them. *Agent* means that persons are things that have the ability to act, to do or achieve things. So a "person," whether divine or human, is a property-bearer that is conscious, and has intellect, will, and the ability to be an agent.

Other notions could be added as well: persons are moral things, i.e., things that can be held morally responsible for causing harm or benefit; persons are things that exist in social relations with other things; and persons are members of linguistic communities. (I intentionally exclude from my definition any such notions as autonomy [in my view God is autonomous but humans are not], privacy, individual rights, or individualism.) So far as the Trinity is concerned, you can talk about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as persons. You can also talk in an extended sense about God (where this means the Godhead or Trinity) as a person, although this has not been the usual language of theology (it is better to say that God is “personal”). But these are simply different ways of talking about the same three-in-one reality. You cannot say that there are four divine persons.

2. *Each of the three persons equally possesses the divine essence.* Thus all three are fully divine, no one of them any more or less so than any of the others. If, *per impossibile*, the three persons were not related trinitarianly, there would exist three Gods. There is one and only one God *because* the persons are related to each other trinitarianly.

3. *The three persons are all equally and essentially divine, metaphysically necessary, eternal (or everlasting), uncreated, omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good.* These are essential properties; the persons could not be the things that they are without them. No one divine person caused any other divine person to exist in any important sense. It is possible for Christians coherently to say things like “The Father is omnipotent” or “The Son is omnipotent” or “The Spirit is omnipotent.” It is also possible for Christians coherently to say, “God (where this means the Godhead) is omnipotent.” But there are not four omnipotent things. Again, these are simply different ways of talking about the same three-in-one reality. In no sense is there any fourth mind, fourth being, or fourth God.

4. *In the immanent Trinity, the basis of all differentiation among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is their relations to each other.* The Father has the relation of “begetting” to the Son, and the Father and (possibly) the Son (depending on which Christian communion you belong to) have the relationship of “spirating” or “sending” to the Spirit. The Spirit proceeds (as it is often said) from the Father through the Son.”¹⁶ Indeed, if as I claim the persons immanently differ primarily in their relations to each other, something like the *Filioque* clause is necessary; otherwise there could conceivably be no way to distinguish the Son from the Spirit.¹⁷

However, “begetting” here does not mean the normal biological act of producing offspring (whereby Abraham begets Isaac, etc.). The Father’s relation to the Son (and the Spirit) is non-causal and non-temporal. The priority had by the Father as the “fount of divinity” is entirely logical in nature. In my view, the Father’s priority has to do only with the proper place to begin an explanation. That the Father is first in the order of explanation is

taken by Christians as a matter of revealed truth (see, among other texts, John 6:46; 8:42; 13:3; 15:26; 16:27-28). The inter-Trinitarian relationships of begetting, etc. have nothing whatever to do with bringing something nonexistent into existence. In the traditional language, what differentiates the persons is paternity for the Father, filiality for the Son, and procession for the Spirit.

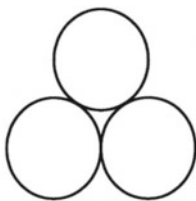
The phrase “of one substance” (*homoousias*) was first used to protect Christ’s full divinity. Later it was used to protect the unity of the three Persons of the Trinity, i.e., to ensure that the Christian view of God is monotheistic. I would say that X and Y are definitely not “of one substance” if X created Y (or vice versa), or if X has existed longer than Y (or vice versa), or if X has existed as God longer than Y (or vice versa). In other words, I hold that an essential aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity is to deny that the Father is God in any stronger or different sense than the Son or the Holy Spirit is God. As we have seen, a robust notion of ontological oneness among the Persons is mandatory for Christians. This is because Christianity accepts monotheism from its parent Judaism as a defining characteristic. Christianity is essentially monotheistic (Deut. 6:4; I Cor. 8:5); without divine ontological oneness, a theology is not Christian.

5. *All three Persons are involved in all extra-Trinitarian acts.* Thus Augustine’s principle, *Omnia opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt* (“All the actions of the Trinity outside itself are indivisible”), which is everywhere attributed to him but is not locatable in his extant writings. For example, only the Son is God incarnate, but the incarnation is the work of all three.

6. *The Persons are related to each other by perichoresis.* As noted, this Greek word, first formally used in this context by John of Damascus, means coinherence, mutual indwelling, interpenetrating, merging. It reaches toward the truth that the core of God’s inner being is the highest degree of self-giving love. The persons are fully open to each other, their actions *ad extra* are actions in common, they “see with each other’s eyes,” the boundaries between them are transparent to each other, and each ontologically embraces the others. But (so someone might ask) doesn’t a core of unshared personal status (Son-ness, let’s say) remain, even in *perichoresis*, even if this core is something like a mere (non-spatial) Euclidian point? Yes, it does; these are the persons; this is the threeness of the Trinity. Again, none of this is to be taken as true only of the Trinity as it appears to us. The Persons are related to each other perichoretically in the inner being of the Blessed Trinity. But do not these “cores of unshared personal status” constitute another way in which the persons immanently differ (besides in relationship, that is)? Not at all. Since there can be no relationships without things that are related, this is a logical implication of their relationships; this is simply another way of saying that they immanently differ only in their relationships.

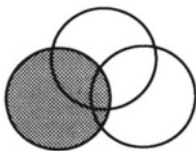
It is a venerable tradition in theology to give analogies of the Trinity. All are ultimately recognized as inadequate, as this one admittedly is. Imagine three circles, which we will call Circles 1, 2, and 3. (Although Christians have often used circles to illustrate the Trinity—a habit that apparently began with Joachim of Fiori [1135-1202]—I am not aware that the use I will make of such figures appears anywhere in the tradition as a Trinitarian analogy; if it does, so much the better.) In State A, the circles border on each other, i.e., the circumference of each circle touches the circumferences of the two others.

State A:



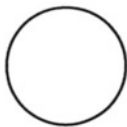
In State B, the circles overlap each other, but not entirely; there is an area that is enclosed by all three circles; there are three areas enclosed by two and only two circles; and there are areas enclosed by one circle only.

State B:



In State C, the circles have wholly merged; they circumscribe the same area.

State C:



Now imagine something that is impossible with geometrical objects like circles and physical objects like human persons. Imagine that the three circles are simultaneously in State A and State C. Then you could legitimately say, of any property p possessed by all three, that Circle 1 is p , that Circle 2 is p , and that Circle 3 is p . You could even speak of the one circle that exists in State C—call it Circle 123—and say that it is p . But you cannot say that there are four things that are p ; that would simply be false. When we imagine that the circles are simultaneously in State A and State C, there are either three circles

or one circle (or the circles are three-in-one)—you decide which way you want to talk—but don't try to say there are four.

"What?"—so a critic might respond at this point—"You are illustrating the Trinity by what you admit is a logical impossibility; how can that possibly help?" Well, it must be kept in mind that this analogy is not an attempt to solve the logical problem of the Trinity, i.e., demonstrate the logical coherence of the dogma. At the moment I am simply trying to explain *perichoresis*. But my claim is that perichoretically related persons *can be* or indeed *are* simultaneously in something like State A and State B, i.e., are simultaneously one and three.

I admit that the Trinity is at bottom mysterious, and that all the anthropomorphic illustrations of the Trinity fail (including this one). If a *riddle* can be solved and a *mystery* continues to puzzle no matter how much we learn or think about it, then my own view is that only in the eschaton will the Christian doctrine of the Blessed Trinity become a riddle. Still, I claim that what my story about the circles illustrates—God simultaneously being three-in-one—is logically possible (for perichoretically related Persons). Indeed, Christians believe that it is actual.

IV

How can Perichoretic Monotheism, thus described, be brought to bear upon Leftow's objections to ST? In the course of his paper Leftow raises many objections to ST. Some of them, as he admits, are not relevant to versions of ST that stress *perichoresis*, and some of them are aimed specifically at the other versions of ST that he considers. I will focus on four of his objections.

1. *ST amounts to tritheism rather than monotheism.* This is Leftow's central worry about all versions of ST. And he is surely correct that any version of Christian trinitarianism that departs from monotheism is theologically unacceptable; if ST amounts to tritheism, it should be rejected. The way Leftow formulates the objection is this: If God is a discrete personal being with the full divine nature, then, because ST says that all three persons are discrete personal beings with the full divine nature, ST posits three Gods. Comparing the Christian God to the Greek pantheon, Leftow says:

So on the functional-monotheist account, the reason the Persons are one God and the Olympians are not is that the Persons are far more alike than Zeus and his brood, far more cooperative, and linked by procession. But it is hardly plausible that Greek paganism would have been a form of monotheism had Zeus & Co. been more alike, better behaved, and linked by the right causal relations."¹⁸

Now I am defending Perichoretic Monotheism rather than the functional monotheism against which Leftow is here training his guns. Yet that point does not suffice by itself to answer the objection; perhaps Leftow's criticism

applies equally well to my preferred version of ST. But I hold that it does not. The crucial point is that the Greek gods were not related to each other perichoretically. Leftow is correct that even if they were better organized, better behaved, of one essence, etc., they would still constitute a plurality of gods rather than one God. Hence, I hold that ST is monotheistic not only because of the Persons' shared divine essence and their necessary agreement and cooperation, but also because of their loving, interpermeating, boundaryless relations with each other.

But Leftow also raises the polytheism issue in a different way. He argues that on ST there must be more than one God, because according to ST there is more than one way to *be* God. One way to be God is to be one of the three divine persons, which ST insists are all fully divine. The other way to be God is to be the Godhead itself, which ST also insists is fully divine. Because there is more than one way to be divine, there is more than one divine being. That is, Leftow insists that if we say of all four members of the set consisting of (a) the Godhead, (b) the Father, (c) the Son, and (d) the Holy Spirit that they "are God," then there are two different ways to be God, and thus four Gods. He says: "Either the Trinity is a fourth case of the divine nature, in addition to the Persons, or it is not. If it is, we have too many cases of deity for orthodoxy. If it is not, and yet is divine, there are two ways to be divine—by being a case of deity, and by being a Trinity of such cases."¹⁹

But this does not follow. We must notice that the predicate "...is God" is being used in two different ways here. The Godhead "is God" in the sense of strict numerical identity. The Godhead (which consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), as we might say, *exhausts* God. Here the word "God" in the predicate "...is God" refers to an individual. But when we say that the Father "is God," the Son "is God," and the Holy Spirit "is God," we are not talking about strict numerical identity; it would be false to say that "the Father exhausts God." Here the predicate "...is God" does not refer to an individual but is a property meaning something close to "is divine."

Accordingly, as noted above, it is possible coherently to talk on the one hand of the Godhead as being God, and it is possible on the other to talk of the Father as God, the Son as God, and the Holy Spirit as God. But these are simply two different ways of talking about one and the same reality. There are not four Gods or even two ways of "being God."

2. *How Many Gods are compatible with monotheism?* In the light of the various attempts by defenders of ST to reconcile the threeness that they emphasize with monotheism, Leftow asks whether there is a maximum allowable numbers of Gods that could be treated in the way that friends of ST treat the three Persons. "It does not seem that we can make a religion monotheist merely by altering its gods' *nature*," he insists.²⁰ And he is surely right about that. Leftow also asks why, on ST, the number is *three*. Why not two or five or a million persons in the Godhead? He says: "The question 'why

does deity have the number of cases it has?’ is live for ST in a way it is not for LT. For LT, there is just one case of deity.”²¹

I would reply that the maximum allowable number of Gods is one. Any religion that posits more than that is polytheistic. Perichoretic Monotheism posits—and ends up with—one and only one God. As to the “Why three?” question, there is no reason for, or explanation of, there being three persons rather than some other number. Three is the number that has been revealed to us; that is the way reality is. But it is not quite true to imply, as Leftow does,²² that advocates of LT are excused from facing this same question. To put the point in Leftow’s terms, the friends of LT still face the question, “Why are there three and not two or a million distinct but not discrete divine persons?”

3. *All versions of ST raise the specter of inequality among the Persons.* Much of what Leftow says on this point is not relevant to the version of ST that I have been defending. Perichoretic Monotheism denies that the Son and the Spirit were created by the Father. All versions of Trinitarianism admit that there are inequities in the economy—the Son but not the Father or the Spirit dies for our sins; the Spirit but not the Father or the Son indwells us, etc. Leftow thinks that this creates more of a problem for ST than for LT, since ST holds that the Persons are discrete things or (as he says) substances. The Son did more for us than the other Persons, since they did not bleed and die for us; ergo, the Persons are unequal. But it is difficult to see how these admitted inequities in the economy constitute any theologically untoward inequity among the Persons. They certainly entail no inequities in the immanent Trinity.

To return to a point discussed earlier, Leftow thinks there are problems of inequity related to his point (which I deny) that on ST there are two ways to be divine—by being one of the Persons and by being the Godhead. The Trinity itself is not the same sort of thing that the Persons are, Leftow says. Doesn’t that mean the Trinity has *more of what it takes to be divine* than the Persons do? Doesn’t it mean that the Trinity is *more divine* than any of the Persons? But again, it is hard to see how this conclusion follows. For one thing, I have already denied that on ST there is more than one way to be God; what we have are two ways of talking about “being divine.” For another, why say that the Godhead is more divine than the Persons? As I have insisted all along, you can say that “The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all divine” and you can say that “The Godhead is divine.” But these are simply two different ways of talking about the same thing.

4. *How can co-mingled divine minds be distinct?* I have stipulated that on Perichoretic Monotheism, all three persons are omniscient. If that is true, then the Son knows all that the Father knows, etc., unless there exist logically private truths like “I am the Father” (when said by the Father) or “I am the spirated one” (when said by the Spirit). The contents of their minds are wholly open to one another. Perhaps something like telepathy is at work. But

Leftow's worry is this: We can make sense of co-mingled but distinct human minds, because we can associate them with different groupings of brain hemispheres. But--he asks--what would keep discarnate divine minds distinct? It would have to be a non-mental state, he says, since all their mental states would presumably be shared among the three by telepathy (or whatever mechanism they use).²³

But surely the non-mental states that Leftow is looking for are simply states like *being the unbegotten one* or *being the begotten one* or *being the one who is sent*, etc. If the three persons are omniscient, the three minds will know not only truths like " $2 + 2 = 4$ " and "Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth in 1865," but also truths like "The Person who says, 'I am the unbegotten one' is the Father."

As far as the reference of the word "I" (when said by God) is concerned, I have been emphasizing that Perichoretic Monotheism is an attempt to describe the immanent Trinity. In some cases it is clear who is talking when the divine "I" is used. "I and the Father are one," very much sounds like the voice of the Son. "This is my beloved Son," sounds like the Father. But there are many cases where the reference is not clear. In such cases it will not matter whether the divine "I" is taken as the voice of one of the Persons or as the voice of the Trinity.²⁴

It has not been part of this essay's aim to explore the difficulties faced by LT. Nevertheless, I will express the opinion that the problems ST has with the oneness of God are exactly paralleled by difficulties LT has with the threeness. We see this even in Leftow's paper. The specter of modalism looms when Leftow says of LT, "for the Son to be in the forefront of an act is just for God to be more prominent in one role (or state, etc.) than he is in others."²⁵ Still, in Leftow's defense, I suspect that there has been a tacit consensus in the tradition that modalism is the least egregious of the Trinitarian heresies, preferable by far to tritheism.²⁶

V

In the end, however, LT and Perichoretic Monotheism nearly, but not quite, come together. They end up being two quite appropriate ways of talking about the same reality, differing mainly in emphasis. If my analysis is correct, both theories are moved slightly toward the other—ST is edged toward LT by *perichoresis*; and LT is edged toward ST by the point that the persons are not *just* relations. The theories virtually merge, because on Perichoretic Monotheism the three are virtually as robustly one as on LT.

But it has been the burden of this essay to argue that the Social Theory of the Trinity need not amount to tritheism. Indeed, it can be defended against Leftow's criticisms. It amounts to a viable option for theologians and

worshippers of the Blessed Trinity. And interpreted along the lines of Perichoretic Monotheism, it ends up differing from LT mainly in emphasis.²⁷

NOTES

¹ Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, S.J., and Gerald O'Collins, S.J. (eds.) *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 203-249.

² Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 10.

³ This despite the fact—as Joseph T. Lienhard has demonstrated—that the phrase "three hypostases in one ousia" is rare in the writings of the Cappadocians. See his "Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'" in *The Trinity* (see footnote 1), pp. 99-121.

⁴ Although Sarah Coakley convincingly disassociates Gregory of Nyssa from ST, or at least from the way ST has been understood by contemporary analytic philosophers. See her "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity," in *The Trinity* (see footnote 1), pp. 123-144.

⁵ Leftow, p. 204.

⁶ See, for example, Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, I (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1983); Michel Rene Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity," and Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity," both in *The Trinity* (see footnote 1).

⁷ See Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 170-191; Cornelius Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga (eds.), *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 21-47;

Edward Wierenga, "Trinity and Polytheism," *Faith and Philosophy* (forthcoming).

⁸ Kelly James Clark, "Trinity or Tritheism," *Religious Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December, 1996), pp. 463-476; Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism."

⁹ Augustine, *On The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956), book 9.

¹⁰ Richard of St. Victor, *de Trinitate* (NY: Paulist Press, 1979), III, 1-25. Perhaps Richard's real concern—placed, as he was, in a monastic setting—was not that there could not be any sharing in love with two alone, but rather that that sharing would or could be selfish, to the exclusion of others, like the "particular friendships" monks were eager to avoid.

¹¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 177-180.

¹² For an argument somewhat similar to mine, see C. J. F. Williams, "Neither Confounding the Persons Nor Dividing the Substance," in Alan Padgett (ed.), *Reason and the Christian Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹³ I develop a version of this proof much more briefly and tentatively in Stephen T. Davis, "A Somewhat Playful Proof of the Social Trinity in Five Easy Steps," *Philosophia Christi*, Series 2, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1999), pp. 103-106.

¹⁴ Arthur Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).

¹⁵ The argument, as it stands, is far from formally valid, but could easily be made so with the addition of a few sub-premises and with the use of standard predicate calculus plus modal operators.

¹⁶ As Gregory of Nyssa himself said. Cited in James Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils, and Controversies*; Rev. ed. (London: SPCK, 1989).

¹⁷ This point is made by David Brown in his essay, "Trinity," in Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1997), p. 528.

¹⁸ Leftow, p. 232; cf. Also p. 208.

¹⁹ Leftow, p. 221.

²⁰ Leftow, p. 233.

²¹ Leftow, p. 239.

²² Leftow, p. 241.

²³ Leftow, p. 225

²⁴ I note here, but do not discuss, a fifth criticism that Leftow raises against ST, viz., that it raises the possibility of conflict among the Persons. I will not reply to this objection because Leftow admits that it does not apply to versions of ST that stress *perichoresis*.

²⁵ Leftow, p. 238.

²⁶ This despite the fact that modalism endangers several important theological points: Christ's full humanity, the loving relationships among the Persons, and the salvific role of Christ as mediator.

²⁷ I would like to thank Sarah Coakley, Christine Helmer, Brian Leftow, Gerald O'Collins, Susan Peppers-Bates, and Dale Tuggy for their very helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

TRINITARIAN WILLING AND SALVIFIC INITIATIVES¹

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On a social trinity model (ST), willings and energies of the three Persons of the Trinity work together as One, with their soteriological rôles giving place to and meshing with significant human freedom. Two accounts of ST are drawn, one ascribing omnipotence once to the Trinity (OSO), the other three times to each Person (TPO). Both affirm a oneness of soteriological objectives; OSO avoids tritheism, TPO avoids tritheism and modalism. Sphere sovereignties of God and humans are preserved, as willings divine and human played out in the application and appropriation of redemption culminate in human exaltation triumphally actualized in the denouement of eschatological fulfillment.

First, I am honored to take part as a presenter along with such a distinguished list of scholars from the East and West. It is a delight to be joined by our friends from the Russian Orthodox Church. I am grateful to Professor Richard Swinburne for his untiring efforts to bring this to pass and for putting together such an impressive program. Special thanks to the Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Danilov Monastery for providing space for us to gather for these important and timely meetings.

In 1986 I had an opportunity to study at Oxford. A favorite pastime was to browse in antiquarian bookshops in Oxford and London, hoping to find titles of philosophical and theological interest that were also antiquarian. Old books in these areas are of special interest to me. I found several good selections that year, one purchase which bears the title, *A Discourse In Vindication of the Trinity: With an Answer to the Late Socinian Objections Against It from Scripture, Antiquity and Reason.*² The author is, Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester, and the date of publication, 1697. A simple statement in the *Preface*, “the three divine Persons are in one undivided Substance”³ captures for the reader a point of agreement between Bishop Edward and his Socinian

detractors. Controversy is claimed to stem from a Socinian *explication* of this belief tantamount to, *Christ is less than divine*. In response, rather than introduce untested new terms, Bishop Edward works with categories hammered out by the creeds. Along the way to showing how the Socinians are wrong, he also takes up the formidable task of demonstrating how it is possible to hold that God exists in three Persons without ending up either a tritheist or a modalist. In making his case, Bishop Edward appeals to Curcelaeus' account of the logic and language in terms of which St. Basil in his *Epistle to Gregory of Nyssa*, gives clear account of the unity of the *essence* of God (an essence "uncapable of number"), drawn in contrast to numbered hypostases—three Persons who by communication (from the Father to the Son, and the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit (for Edward and some Fathers of the Eastern Church)) share in this one divine essence. Thus Bishop Edward's sympathies fall in line with a view of the Trinity known as "Social Trinitarianism" (hereafter ST), often associated with key figures of the Eastern Church. The Persons are viewed as a Society of Persons. By contrast the Latin Church, following Augustine, is more inclined toward formal accounts of the Trinity (hereafter, FT), spelled out more abstractly thus, while the Father *generates* the Son, and hence the Son is in a filial relation to the Father, the Holy Spirit is said to *proceed principaliter* (as from a principle)⁴ from the Father and the Son. Our study will work primarily with the ST model for a number of reasons, one of which is, social-trinitarianism is arguably more compatible with the richness of the personal-social accounts in the New Testament of the three Persons. The scope of this study does not allow an expansion of this interesting side to the issues that concern us. Working with the ST model, I will try to show how willings and energies (a term (see note 40) with greater currency in the Eastern tradition than the West) of the Persons of the Trinity work together as One, and how their roles in respect to the salvation of humanity give space to and mesh with genuine human freedom. I shall discuss (A) Trinitarian models along with Trinitarian willings and energies directed toward salvific initiatives and ends, and (B) the display and interplay of divine willings and energies with choices and behaviour of significantly free human agents, in a manner overall compliant with expectations of coherence. Regarding the focus of (A), I offer two coherent models of the Trinity each affirming three divine persons as willing salvific initiatives always in concert as one Holy Trinity. In (B) our attention is directed mainly to the sphere sovereignties respectively of God and humans, and how willings divine and human play out in the actual application of redemption, with a particular focus upon human exaltation as an element of triumphal eschatological fulfillment.

A. TRINITARIAN MODELS AND TRINITARIAN WILLING

Profiling God as One and yet also Trinitarian is a high and lofty order. A survey of standard works in theology representing Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant theologies,⁵ shows that mainstream Christianity through the centuries has maintained that God is both one and trinitarian, but the task of making this clear and coherent has been thought by many to be nearly impossible. How can defenders of the faith affirm a genuine trinity of persons without sliding into tritheism, or the oneness of the three without ending up with some variant form of modalism?

Contemporary author, Peter van Inwagen, in "The Trinity," summarily describes worrisome identity transivities if certain identity claims are made regarding the individual persons of the Trinity.⁶ For example, Socinian John Biddle has charged that the Trinity "implies a violation of the principle of the transivity of identity, because it implies that the Father is identical with God, God is identical with the Son, and the Father is not identical with the Son."⁷ Van Inwagen asks, How then might the theist formulate a clear account of the Trinity that is orthodox and that avoids this difficulty? Two attempts are outlined, Richard Swinburne's proposal that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be thought of as three divine persons incapable of independent existence from each other, and Peter Geach's model that works with a relative identities notion coupled with *sortal* terms.⁸ Van Inwagen incorporates Geach's root idea into a relative identity view of his own. We will look briefly at van Inwagen's account and then Swinburne's, since my own take on the issue works with some of Swinburne's ideas.

The approach of Geach (and G. E. M. Anscombe) involves relational identities and *sortal* terms.⁹ *Sortal* or *count terms* were originally introduced by P. F. Strawson to make explicit ontological claims that work with a distinction between mass terms (*water, wood, etc.*) and *sortal* terms (*man, book, etc.*). On a semantic take, the latter *refer* to "discrete, well-delineated objects," while the former, "refer without making explicit how the referent is individuated."¹⁰ According to Geach then, "identity is always relative to a *sortal* term," such as, *man, book*.¹¹ Van Inwagen's model is a refinement of Geach's proposal with nuances he borrows from Martinich. In place of the standard "textbook" logic of identity, he introduces a wider notion he feels reflects actual variant notions of identity, including relational identity. Moreover, he thinks he can avoid contradictions regarding identity claims about the Trinity if they are viewed as relative identities. His "relative identities" model requires among other things, setting aside the notion of

Identity *simpliciter*, and singular terms (because they denote exactly one object/subject). In place of working with singular terms, such as *book*, *car*, his proposal incorporates a variation of Russell's Theory of Descriptions. Thus in making relative identity claims, *book* will occur only in phrases like, "is the same book as," and *car*, "is the same car as." With more fine tuning, he believes most if not all of the problems that arise in Trinitarian formulations are resolvable if claims about God and Persons of the Trinity are expressed in terms of "two relative identity predicates, respectively,¹² one "is the same substance as," and the other "is the same persons as" and the two other predicates—one which "expresses the divine nature" and the other expressing the three persons, for example, "there exists *x*, *y* and *z*, all of which are divine."¹³ Van Inwagen leaves it up to the theologian to decide whether his account fits the Biblical data and satisfies theological expectations. Van Inwagen's turn is an interesting one, but I shall have to leave it to the reader to explore further how his model impacts divine willings and salvific initiatives.

According to Swinburne, each Person of the Trinity is numerically distinct from the others, and each is necessarily existent, omnipotent, omniscient and perfectly good. Moreover, the Father who exists necessarily, generates the Son out of a necessity issuing from the Father's loving nature. And, the perfection of the Father and Son respectively, necessarily impels them—the Father and the Son, or the Father through the Son—in turn to generate the Holy Spirit. Since the Divine Society is complete in respect to the sharing of love, there is no good reason or necessity for others.

Working with the latter approach, our attention is now directed to God's agency. Since he is both one and trinitarian, how does agency get parsed in respect to both foci? If God's oneness is uppermost, how does one avoid modalism? And if God as trinity is, how does one avoid tritheism? If, for example, only the Godhead is omnipotent, does this inevitably lead to some sort of modalism? If each Person is, how does one then escape tritheism? No doubt, if an agent is to be omnipotent, then the attribute of omniscience will have to be affirmed as well, since an agent lacking omniscience might fail to have knowledge of all possible sets of states of affairs that are actualizable. Aspects of God's knowledge come up in connection with the notion of *person* and *self-consciousness* and *self-knowledge*, but for our purposes, the main focus is upon omnipotence as it relates to trinitarian willings. God's omniscience will have to wait for another study.

Regarding God's agency and willings, an analysis could break down into: (1) Trinitarian willings, i.e., three will as one; (2) individual Person willings, e.g., the Father wills; (3) combinations of Person willings, e.g., the Father and Son will.

God's willings in respect to the attribute of *omnipotence* can be understood in either of two ways. The first is a model that ascribes omnipotence *once* to a single Substance, the Trinity (I will refer to it as, *One*

Substance Omnipotence, OSO), and the other explicitly ascribes omnipotence to each Person of the Trinity, to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (I will refer to this as *Three Person Omnipotence*, TPO). Regarding OSO, no one alone is God in the *fullest* sense of the term. That is, the Father is *divine*, but he is *not* identical with the *Trinitarian God*, because the latter denotes (refers to) a Trinity of Persons. A similar point is made regarding the Son and the Holy Spirit. Does this square with the Christian's belief that Jesus is God, a belief reflective of the claim in John's Gospel, that the Word (Jesus) was God? My answer to both is "yes," but with the expansion that Jesus is not identical with *God the Trinity*, but with the *second Person* who is a member of the *Trinity*, and in that sense he *is God*. In that sense the Word is God. On my account, difficulty arises when the believer singles out and separates from the rest one member of the Trinity in a way tantamount to dividing and separating one from the others. The problem contemplated is generated when the boundaries of the identity in question are not clearly drawn. One of a *threesome* is not identical with the threesome, but is a member of the threesome. I should like to expand on this oneness and threeness in ST terms.

The richness and depth of trinitarian unity merits closer inspection. In ST sources, two closely related terms are of special interest to our study. The first is introduced by John of Damascus in his exegesis of, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me,"¹⁴ viz., *circumincession* (from *περιχωρησις*, meaning, *rotation, to go around*).¹⁵ It is an expression that gained currency among the Scholastics. Later, a variant evolved, *circuminsession* (which means, *an insitting or indwelling*).¹⁶ Two sorts of emphases emerged, one working with *circumincession*, stressed *an abiding presence*, and gained followers in the Latin tradition because it gives attention to the divine essence. The other, *circuminsession*, stressed the *dynamic circulation of Trinitarian life from each to the others*, which "begins from persons, borne to each other eternally, irresistably, by their very identity as subsistent relations."¹⁷ Circumincession, according to O'Carroll, appealed more to the Greek mind. The latter, on his account, transcends anything that we find in human communities. The *inseparability-of-persons* concept I wish to draw regarding the Trinity embraces the core concepts of circuminsession *and* circumincession together with their emphases, so that together they form a stronger statement than either term singly. The rich language of the two picture the Persons of the Trinity as sustaining a profoundly close relationship, in an abiding way each present to the others, and in a "flowing dynamic" relation continuous and eternal. Thus this *combinatorial-perichoretic* concept presents us with a fuller and more enduring picture of togetherness. How is *person* to be understood?

Person as applied to the members of the Trinity resembles in important ways the sense the term has as when applied to humans, but not without controversy. David Brown's modern account of *person*¹⁸ which begins with René Descartes' emphasis on self-reflection owing to his attention to the

cogito, is significantly enlarged by Immanuel Kant's expansion of Descartes' self-reflective model so as to include the moral. The picture is completed by an emphasis of Derek Parfit that draws from Kant. It is the notion of *maximal self-reflection*. How does this expanded notion of maximal moral self-consciousness fit the divine? Brown says that the meaning these categories are going to have must reflect the "sort of society that is being envisaged." There isn't space here to spell out a complete picture of God's knowledge of himself, but it is important to our interest here to say that what God knows about himself is continuous and immediate. Brown adds rightly that *self-reflection/self-consciousness* is something that is appropriately ascribed to a being that has "existence in itself." On my account, God has existence in himself necessarily, and if so, a maximal sort of self-consciousness (MSC) because of his mode of necessary and maximal existence. Here I wish to distinguish between two sorts of MSC, MSC1 and MSC2. The former is the sort of MSC ascribed to a member of the Trinity, the latter to the Trinity in *unity*.

One further wrinkle needs ironing regarding *person*. Rather than say that God as Trinity is *person*, Christian theologians have rightly characterized the Trinity as *personal*. This descriptive term captures the basic notion shared by this unique society of persons. The Trinity as personal, reflects a compendious-unity-of-consciousnesses with three distinguishable centers. Person as applied to each member of the compendium, picks out one member and the respective MSC. The former personal entity as a compendious-unity-of-consciousness has MSC2—the maximality of three infinite self-consciousnesses. Hence we may say God as Trinity possesses MSC2, but each member within the perichoretic bond possesses MSC1 individually, and MSC2 perichoretically.

Each "exists in himself" in the sense that necessity is factored according to the Trinitarian order, first to the Father, then in a filial way to the Son, and then in procession, to the Holy Spirit. Each one has a necessary existence, but it is a necessity that is to be understood in terms of the perichoretic bond, hence no single Person exists necessarily in a way independent of the others. Further precisising, no doubt, is necessary if there is to be a proper understanding of how these terms apply to the Trinitarian Members, but this brief picture will do for a starter on *self-consciousness*. Some element of univocity regarding the divine and human applications must be preserved, if analogy is to have a genuine similarity of content. That sameness might be, *a self-awareness of the self's existence, over against another*. One point of difference arises from the mode of the self-awareness of each. The Persons have it immediately, the creature in reflection. With this conceptual framework, how are we to draw the OSO and TPO models?

The OSO model does not present a transivity of identity difficulty. It affirms that each person, along with the other two, is omnipotent as a *member*

of the Trinity. At least initially conceived, omnipotence is ascribed only once, to the Trinity of Persons and just in case when all three are in view, they work together. On this take, the Father is omnipotent then, because he is a member of the Trinity, and because he always wills in concert with the other members of the Trinity.¹⁹

By contrast, the TPO model is roughly hewn in a way compatible with the Swinburnian model. There is one God, since there is only *one substance* in the *true* sense of the term, which means *simpliciter, this substantial entity can stand alone as no other can*. Created beings cannot truly stand alone, they derived their existence, hence their existence is contingent. But neither can a person of the Trinity stand truly alone without the other members. Humans, contingent in nature, have their existence explained in terms of God's *creative* activity. The Persons (of the Trinity) are necessary, but the necessity understood obtains in the context of a very strong perichoretic relationship. The Father exists necessarily, but he does not have this necessity in isolation or independence. A necessity issuing from his very essence impels him to generate the Son, eternally. According to Richard of St. Victor and Richard Swinburne, since God is essentially a loving Being ("God is love."²⁰), there is a society of Persons. The Father eternally generates the Son out of a necessity issuing from his nature—He is a loving being--and so the Son he generates cannot *not be*. The Father thus has an eternal Lover. Moreover, without another, yet a third, there is no witness for sharing the eternal loving of the Father and Son, and so the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father.²¹ The *de re* necessities of the Son and Spirit thus arise from an essential propensity, "an inner impellingness issuing from an internal nature and drive" of the Father to give and show forth love. Hence trinitarian love has its logical prius in the Father. The picture, albeit incomplete, is the ST model of never-ending inner-Trinitarian love, beginning with a necessarily existing, infinitely loving Father, who necessitates the only possible set of states of affairs, viz., the eternal necessary existence by generation of a reciprocatingly-loving Son and a witnessing-loving Holy Spirit. The Son's generation and the procession of the Holy Spirit are both eternal.

The OSO and TPO models are not without their difficulties and objections. Our attention is confined to four that some might think face OSO, at least initially conceived (where omnipotence is explicitly ascribed to the Trinity), and two (no doubt there are others) that might be thought to face TPO.

First, it might be charged that on the OSO Model, the Persons of the Trinity are not significant bearers of the term *person*, since none of them can choose independently of the other two. Three distinct willing capacities are identified, but alone they can't do anything. Each Person alone appears to be less potent than an ant! In fact, each appears to lack potency altogether, hence the notion of willing or willing capacity appears to be empty, and hence the

notion, *person*, is weakened. But the charge operates with a mistaken account of the Trinity, where Person is viewed in isolation. This sort of move fails to take account of the circumincession/circumincession assumed earlier. On this reading, each is omnipotent in the sense that each works necessarily with each of the other members. When this condition is satisfied, omnipotence is appropriately ascribed, once to the Trinity, comprised of three Persons, each of which is omnipotent in that relationship.

There is at least one other worry here. What sort of implications does this view have for divine freedom? If each Person is necessarily in agreement with the other Persons, as stated, then is the Second Person free to love the Father? It doesn't seem so. If this is the case, then does this love have any moral or religious significance?

Second, the model appears to deny the true divinity of each of the persons of the Trinity, since no one by himself is *fully God*. Doesn't this go contrary to strong affirmations of the Scripture, and the logic of the councils of the Church? The Scriptures claim, as observed earlier, that Christ the Word *is* God.²² If one is to follow Biblical accounts on this point, then some kind of identity is at work here. A rejoinder open to the theist opting for the OSO Model is, in the Johannine passage we do not have an identity *simpliciter*. Rather, the Biblical passage is elliptical for, *Christ the Word is identical with the Second Person of the Trinity*, and that *Trinity is God*. This is a powerful and strong claim regarding Christ's ontological status, since on the OSO Model, each person of the Trinity has this *same status*, and each falls short of a precise identity with the *Trinitarian Godhead*.

Three, does the view really affirm a significant Trinity of Persons? If the Three do not have independent willing capacities, even though they are distinguishable willing capacities that work in concert, does the expansion give us a *real* Trinity? Are they distinct willing capacities if in willing they merely rubber stamp each other's ends, i.e., one Person initiates a willing and the other Persons consent to it. Why not affirm just one will? The point here is, *perichoresis* involves three willing capacities plugged into the omnipotence of the Trinitarian God, and the three capacities in question are not just numerically distinct, but they are also distinguishable in terms of their respective roles and histories. Their working together in concert doesn't vitiate lines of distinctiveness, numerical and functional (Here roles associated with the Economic Model are in mind.). There is a willing capacity which is engaged by one Person rather than either of the other two in a unique way, as in the case of the Living Word.²³ In venues where this willing capacity expresses divine willings, the other Persons have roles, but they are different. The point is, there is a distinct willing capacity in mind, and correspondingly, distinct willings that characterize the Second Person of the Trinity that do not properly characterize the willings of either of the others. So one might flesh this response out in terms of collaboratives, embracing components factored

out according to disparate roles. The history of redemption evidences a threefold pattern of willings corresponding to three distinct willing capacities of the Three Persons. Hence the Persons work together omnipotently as members of the Trinity on divine collaboratives.

Four, related to the above concern, is the question, does OSO not really reduce to a kind of modalism? If omnipotence is factored only once to the Trinity, and to each member in sequence, isn't this modalism? But why not each Member together with another, or all three together? If the second, then omnipotence is factored twice, and if the latter, then three times. Is OSO no different from TPO? Yes. On OSO, each Person has the omnipotence belonging to the Trinity as Trinity, and hence has only his individual immediate access to omnipotence, not the immediate access of either of the other two Persons. This particular access is for the willing of this Person, in contrast to the willings of the other two Persons. While each may be said to be omnipotent as a member of the Trinity, omnipotence is not exhausted in the individual possession of immediate access to the capacity in question. The distinction is analogous to the claim that no one Person is wholly God, because God wholly conceived is a Trinity, and not one Person.

The contrasting alternative TPO model might be thought to face the charge of tritheism. Notice that the language used to describe the Members of the Trinity has been guarded. Moreover, if by *God*, one means *a Being that can stand alone with no qualifiers, absolutely*, the TPO passes this test, even if couched in Swinburnian terms. Swinburne's claim that there are three Persons is expressed with a strong qualifier. *None* of them can exist *independently*, and their respective omnipotences are *perichoretically compossible*, as are all their attributes. Hence the asseveration, *there is one God, and beside him there is no other*.²⁴ Biblical Christianity has always affirmed a Godhead. This model spells this out in a maximal way. OSO initially conceived affirms that God as Trinity is omnipotent, and so is each member, as a *member* of that Trinity, but TPO affirms that God is omnipotent in a way that allows each Person an individual claim to the property in question.

Does the TPO model not allow omnipotence to be factored four times, to the Trinity, and to each of the members of the Trinity? If so, do we not have four omnipotent beings? In a way analogous to the ascription of the term God to the Trinity as a whole, the theist holding to TPO might say that God as a Trinity is omnipotent, but the ascription is not another factoring in of omnipotence. God as a whole is omnipotent, compendiously or maximally so, because each member is. And that omnipotence is not compromised by its individual possession, since each Person always works in concert with the other members.

What are the strengths of the OSO versus the TPO? A distinct advantage of OSO is the transparency of its monotheism. There are not three omnipotent

entities, but One. The strengths of the TPO model may outweigh its possible weaknesses. There is first the straightforward sense in which each Person of the Trinity is omnipotent. Each is omnipotent, that is, *each Person has as an individual property the capacity to bring about any logically possible set of states of affairs compossible with the nature of the Godhead.*²⁵ The OSO model spells out omnipotence as follows: *the capacity shared with the other members of the Trinity, to bring about any logically consistent set of states of affairs compossible with the nature of the Godhead.* Both affirm a concert of willing capacities.

Perhaps the most significant advantage of the TPO Model is the factoring of omnipotence three times *individually*, in respect to the force and meaning of inner-Trinitarian loving, a concept taken as important to the Social Trinity Model. The TPO Model helps give sense to individual expressions of love eternally. We have cited the Scriptural statement that *God is love*. Richard of St. Victor²⁶ and Richard Swinburne²⁷ give us as clear a picture as we find in the literature on the subject of inner-Trinitarian loving. *Perichoresis* is principally manifest in the divine expression of love. Each Person of the Trinity expresses love eternally for each of the others. On the TPO model there are three omnipotent beings, hence the expression of love is maximal and free flowing precisely because each Agent possesses an individual infinite capacity enabling this expression. Both models work with a concert-of-wills notion, and the OSO model allows each Person access to omnipotence in the exchange and expression of love, but the TPO *explicitly* factors infinite power individually so as to make more robust these powerful metaphors of love. Thus the Father loves the Son, infinitely, because infinite power is at his disposal, and so also the Son the Father. The Holy Spirit brings full circle to this divine Society of Lovers. Omnipotence, factored in this Trinitarian fashion *individually*, allows this love to flow according to the fullest sense of circumincession and circuminsession. Each Person taps his individual omnipotence.

We have seen in the preceding, that profiling divine persons is not an easy task. There are other concerns that have not been unravelled here, such as, in what sense does *person* apply to God, if at all, if he is transcendent? Various transcendence theses have been defended.²⁸ We cannot take this up in a way that would do it justice here. I shall have to be content to say that such terms apply to God analogously, with some sort of univocal content preserved, or significant meaning for this term is lost. I prefer the analogy of proportionality rather than attribution, since in the former, univocity is retained.

Regarding Trinitarian willings and salvific initiatives, we can only offer a starter here. A separate account is not offered for the OSO model. The TPO model endorses the divine circumincession idea, which means that there is a divine "circulation of Trinitarian life,"²⁹ such that when it comes to willing, the individual members work together. The intimacy contemplated here finds

its reflection in the words of Christ, "I and the Father are One," or, "He that seen me, hath seen the Father."³⁰ If as we have affirmed, the Son is eternally generated by the Father, then conceivably this carries volitional implications. The story might run as follows. Because of this eternal generation, the willing of the Father is logically prior to the Son's. Regarding divine salvific initiatives, there is likely a compendious set of divine collaboratives with human redemption envisioned as their end. Take the Father's willing regarding salvific ends in logical array, as a logical prius to the Son's willing. The Father is spoken of as extending a *call*³¹ to humans. Some take it as an effectual call that cannot be repudiated or rejected, it is a sufficient condition for achieving the end contemplated, the salvation of humans. On this take, those thus called, respond in faith, because they are regenerated (as this one account goes) by the Holy Spirit, and thereby enabled to do so. Our purpose here is not to spell out the various theological models offered of the application of redemption, or to promote one, but rather to sketch a sample account. It is important here to see one possible way to view the Father's role in salvation that some think reflects the Biblical data. The call in question then is pictured in Scripture as issuing from the Father, and not the Son or Holy Spirit. The Son provides salvific grounds giving purchase to the call, and the Holy Spirit is described as bringing about a change in the human heart to prepare it (the heart) for this call. Thus according to this theological perspective, each Person has a function. It is an economic slant, but one might also argue that these functions also point to, hint at, or are reflective of God's nature. This ordering of function, might reflect or hint at the metaphysical ordering, if along with the functions one takes seriously other claims, such as, the Son is generated of the Father, and if this claim is parsed in terms of an order of all divine willings. Circuminsession on this level might be a pointer to eternal *perichoresis*.

The above soteriological notions associated with willing capacities fall into place with the necessary qualifiers fitting the possession individually of omnipotence. The Father in his individual omnipotence, issues an effectual call. Omnipotence energizes this salvific initiative. This omnipotence works collaboratively with the other willings, but independently factored in. The Son also wills in his omnipotence to submit to human incarnational categories. The Holy Spirit in his omnipotence, works to apply redemption to the human heart, and so we have a start to Redemption's application in terms of divine salvific willings expressing corresponding initiatives. There are then, three omnipotent beings, working together, each with a collaborative role.

The conclusion to this section is, there are at least initially, two disparate models of the Trinity, and consequently of Trinitarian willing. They are alike in at least one respect—both affirm that the willings of the individual members of the Trinity are always in concert, they work together on divine collaboratives. The main difference between the two is the factoring out of

omnipotence. According to the OSO Model each Person plays his role with access to a common omnipotence ascribed to the Trinity. The TPO account seems to give a clearer and more explicit account of inner-Trinitarian loving. And, because omnipotence is assigned directly to the Members of the Trinity, this move appears to facilitate accounts of *individuality* regarding willings effecting human redemption as well. Both allow sensible accounts of divine initiatives—divine energies in a salvific direction, as St. Basil might express it.³²

B. HUMAN WILLINGS INTERPLAY WITH DIVINE WILLINGS

There are lots of issues here any one of which is an intellectual journey in itself. What is the nature of divine action?, Is God in time, or is he timeless? No doubt an answer to these questions affect the whole matter of divine willing.³³ We will not be attending to these interesting side issues, but the more central one, how God's actions interplay with the human, specifically with regard to salvific initiatives. Part of that story has to do with human willings in response to divine salvific initiatives? The history of the Christian tradition is an incredibly rich complex account of disparate beliefs on this matter, ranging from Calvinistic predestination and foreknowledge, to an open-ended view of God that allows he is open in his willing and knowledge regarding the salvation of human agents.

Where do human initiatives enter the picture, and what is the degree of freedom and power attaching to them? While we might not be able to offer final answers to all these questions here, one point is important as we begin. If God is essentially sovereign, as I take him to be, then the freedom God gives can never be in conflict with his sovereignty.

Having said this, one key question comes to mind that has troubled theologians down through the centuries. Who decides on the matter of salvation's application, God or humans, or some combination of the two? We can only hope to offer starter answers by way of response to this question, since there are so many issues, and so many positions on the issues in the three main Christian traditions that concern us, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy. Some concepts emerge as important and central to the landscape of the question.

A line worth considering at this juncture might be the one that says, if God really is sovereign, then an important part of that, and evidence of it in fact, is the possibility of his creating agents which are genuinely free. On this take, he is so powerful, that giving significant freedom to human agents doesn't threaten his sovereignty. Arguably, only weak notions of God's power

and sovereignty eliminate genuine human freedom. All creatures *derive* their power, their very being from God. Since he sustains all that is, as he did all that was, and will all that will be, there is nothing that threatens him, since he cannot by reason of his very nature bring about a world with a distribution of power that in any way has the potential of compromising his sovereignty.

The really troublesome question centers on the issue of where the *line* or boundary is that marks off divine from human agency—where human power and choices end, and the divine pick up. That line is perhaps not something we can ever really fully know or delineate. At best we can speculate. But speculation has at least the boundaries outlined above, the respective sovereignties, the human derived, and the eternally divine.

No doubt, between now and the end of time as we know it (as metricated), the various views now differentiated will continue to have their adherents. Three central views have emerged, one affirming human freedom of choice, the other affirming God's predestination of human destiny, and third, a compatibilism which affirms both. If as we have said earlier, God is essentially sovereign, then perhaps he is sovereign regarding salvation in such a way that he holds the cards when it comes to salvific initiatives and their efficacy in respect to and in contrast to human responses. If so, then the human agent takes second place.

God knows much more than any human agent will ever know about himself/herself. He has powers of persuasion. And he has infinite and compelling love. But if love is the condition of response on the part of the creature, then significant freedom is arguably a condition of that kind of response, should God want it.

The picture is made more difficult if the above point is expanded. The general picture in the Scriptures is that humans have a choice regarding their destinies. In one place in the Scriptures, God is spoken of as saying that his Spirit will not always strive with a person.³⁴ At least two readings of this passage are possible: (1) God will some time stop striving, and will bring his will to pass; (2) God will cease working with a person, and give them up to their desires. There appear to be places in Biblical revelation which suggest that the latter is to be preferred. God could allow an openness whereby created agents enjoy significant freedom. Conceivably, this openness could be extended to include choices regarding salvation. Humans might have the power to determine their own destinies, ultimately. This is only possible, if such freedom does not interfere with God's ultimate choices and objectives regarding salvific initiatives. But there is a more important reason to grant the sort of freedom in question. If previous discussion of perichoretic love is taken seriously, God is a lover in the most robust and radical sense of the term. But perhaps this divine love reaches depths, heights and breadths we could never and so never will fully imagine.³⁵ Perhaps an outgrowth of this love is God wants creatures free. He wants creatures to love him, and perhaps

the sort of love he wants can take place only if it can be expressed freely. The alternative is God predetermines those who will love him. Somehow, this line does not seem to do justice to love, both divine and human. It is sovereignty that leaves us with a puzzle, perhaps in this life one that is intractable.

The display and interplay of divine salvific initiatives may have no more fitting end than one that falls in line with an emphasis of Orthodoxy. For decades now, I have been comfortable with most of what I find in the Western Christian tradition. But more recently, I have found a teaching in Orthodoxy that has led to serious reexamination of my Christian beliefs, the belief of theosis, the deification of humans. I am a neophyte to the literature, but I found Georgios I. Mantzaridis', *The Deification of Man*,³⁶ fascinating. Some, if not much of what I have to say, may not accurately reflect the basic ideas leading up to and associated with this doctrine. Talking about it presents difficulties, at least according to many of its followers. Mantzaridis quotes Palamas as saying that, "even when spoken of, deification remains unutterable...it can be identified only by those who have been blessed with it."³⁷ It involves a mystical relationship, a "face-to-face" encounter with God with "profound eschatological significance."³⁸ I want to begin with this, since this focus not only brings a fitting eschatological closure to this inquiry, it also brings to view what may be the central purpose for which God has made us and redeemed humanity. Since he is an infinite and eternal lover, and since that love drove the Father to generate the Son and bring about by procession the Holy Spirit, perhaps that love that so overflows that threeness is in some sense incomplete, because God is essentially a creator as well as lover. That creative impellingness led to the creation of angelic and human agents. But for an end that perhaps the West has not fully grasped, but which the Eastern Church has known and celebrated through the centuries. God is indeed all powerful, as he is indeed sovereign. In fact, he is so all powerful in his demonstration and sharing of love, that all three Persons of the Trinity play and display this love in a marvellous *Concert of Redemption*.

But there is much more than redemption. Perhaps God wants creatures very much like himself. The new turn is, he has created creatures that he wants to lift up to himself, and what better way than to equip them for this "lofty life" with him? Even if in the project of world-making, the prospect of a fall brings with it the possibility of alienation because of sin, that does not daunt him. No doubt, a great and powerful Creator might very well have brought about creatures who never fell.³⁹ He could have confirmed them in that perfection from the beginning. But isn't it a greater show of divine willings and energies,⁴⁰ to bring about a salvific end for creatures lost—to bring an orderly path to "wandering stars?" Perhaps it is a *greater good* in fact to allow a fall—to create a world he knew would fall, or at the very least it was a genuine possibility, and he knew it. Perhaps he contemplated this turnout, a *redemption specification* that makes possible godlike beings, lofty

like himself (though still derived creatures), maximally demonstrating thereby his power and love. How fitting an end for the maximally powerful and loving Triune God⁴¹ By his world-making he brings about the possibility of making good beings out of those who fall into moral corruption. He redeems them and makes them like himself in every way compossible with his nature. He makes godlike creatures out of fallen creatures—what a contrast. Perhaps this sort of turn is a greater manifestation of power and love to the creature.

For me, there is no question that God is sovereign. He is essentially so. But the question is, how much of it does he have to retain to remain essentially so? Sovereign over everything, every agent, every venue? He certainly could be if he wanted. But our earlier question emerges again, Is he in any significant way sovereign over a creature, if the creature has no power? On the flip side, he can't be the only genuine agent, if he chooses to create genuinely significantly free agents. We have contended that there are no threats to a God who is *essentially* all-powerful and sovereign. There are only scenarios where he can manifest his love in the gifts that he gives. And the Scriptures make it clear, that on this he has no rivals, and he has expressed his love in the highest possible way, he has not withheld the closest to his heart.⁴² He has given Christ to the world. Will he then withhold any power that he *can* give?

Theosis, making creatures like gods, fits the New Testament picture of God's gracious and infinite, ineffable love. Would a sovereign being not *want* creatures who are capable of operating on a level more compatible with himself, since he has chosen to bring about creatures with whom he will spend *eternity*? Paul said that we must put on immortality and incorruption to this end.⁴³ That is, so that we can enjoy the lofty realms where God is present, in ever greater measure. God could not have created omnipotent gods when he considered world-making. But why not godlike creatures, not omnipotent, but in power in many ways like God? Humans were created a little lower than the angels. But we are told that even the angels desire to look into the things he has done for us. In making and forming us godlike, he might also have made us derivatively sovereign and free in the human sphere to choose to be one with him, and reign with him.

And as for those who reject God, "who strut and fret their hour upon the stage, and then are heard no more, their lives are," as Shakespeare said, "tales told by idiots, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." But for those who choose a new humanity in Christ, they are exalted to reign with him in the heavens. They will be like gods, sovereign, albeit under God's sovereignty. All that belongs to Christ, belongs to them. Augustine's picture of the two kingdoms is on the mark. Somehow, together, both destinies reflect the glory of God *and* his love. Even those who choose to reject the New Adam, are fitted for that choice—a threshold is placed in the creature by God which he sees fitting in his justice and mercy. The reign there with the Prince of

Darkness is empty, meaningless *on its own*, since even there, God is supreme. Somehow, God's sovereignty wins no matter what, perhaps as some think, also his mercy. In some final way, on his terms, no doubt, it all makes sense, that is, the existence of both universes or kingdoms, one of light and one of darkness. Hence it is for God a possible world, perhaps even the better, on balance, of two possible worlds.

O goodness infinite, goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand
Whether I should repent me now of sin
By me done and occasioned, or rejoice
Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring,
To God more glory, more good will to men
From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ I am indebted to Stephen T. Davis, William Hasker, George Mavrodes, Bruce Reichenbach, and Richard Swinburne for comments made that led to corrections and improvements of the paper since its delivery in Moscow.

² Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester, *A Discourse In Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity: With An Answer To the Late Socinian Objections Against it from Scripture, Antiquity and Reason*. London: Printed by J. H. for Henry Mortlock at the Phoenix in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1697.

³ *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

⁴ See Michael O'Carroll, *Trinitas, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*, p. 44. See also "Doctrine of the Trinity," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. For Augustine, the distinction between the Son's relationship to the Father in contrast to the Holy Spirit's is drawn in terms of "filiation" which expresses the relationship the Son bears to the Father, and "spiration" which expresses the relationship the Spirit bears to the Father conveyed through the Son, p. 1641. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁵ See, Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Michael O'Carroll, *Trinitas*, Richard of St. Victor, *The Trinity*, Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God*, Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*.

⁶ Peter van Inwagen, "The Trinity," the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig, Vol. IX, New York: Routledge Publishers, 1998, 457-461. See, "Mass Terms, by Jeffry Pelletier, in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, New York: Routledge, 1998, 168-170. See van Inwagen's essay in this volume.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 458.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

¹⁰ *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Mass Terms," Vol. VI, p. 168.

¹¹ Peter van Inwagen, "The Trinity," p. 460.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 460.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 460. See Peter van Inwagen's paper in this volume, "Three Persons in One Being: On Attempts to Show that the Doctrine of the Trinity is Self-contradictory."

¹⁴ John 10:38b.

¹⁵ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Volume I (compact edition), p. 418. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971. See, *Trinitas, A Theological Encyclopedia of the Holy Trinity*, Michael O'Carroll, Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

¹⁷ Michael O'Carroll, *Trinitas*, p. 69.

¹⁸ David Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, London: Duckworth, 1985.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy in this connection to draw attention to a feature of Swinburne's view regarding three omnipotent Persons. The attribute in question is thus ascribed but with the necessary condition that the three Persons *always work together*.

²⁰ I John 4:8.

²¹ Swinburne in *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), argues that the generation of the Holy Spirit is a "cooperative act," which bears some affinity to the *filioque* clause endorsed in the same sense by the Western Church. Here Swinburne comments, "The Orthodox Church is not as such committed to the falsity of [the force and content of the] *filioque* [clause]; it is only committed to the view that the Pope had no right to put it in the Creed without a Council having decided this. That the Son was involved in the procession of the Spirit from the Father has certainly been taught by various Eastern theologians who are

much respected in the Orthodox Church—especially, for example, St. Maximus the Confessor.”

As for using the term *create* when speaking of the Father’s relationship to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, I want to follow the spirit of the Nicene Council (325 A.D.), expressed in one of its central tenets, “begotten, not made,” R. S. Franks, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., Ltd., 1953. I share Eusebius’ nervousness with the use of *made* or of *create* in this context. A similar remark, *mutatis mutandis*, applies to the Holy Spirit. For the original form of the Nicene Creed, see *The Creeds of Christendom with A History and Critical Notes*, Philip Schaff, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877, p. 60. It is my preference then to not speak of each Person as God, but rather to speak about *divine* Persons, following the advice of Gregory of Nyssa in “On Not Three Gods,” which addresses a concern Gregory had with the young Bishop, Ablabias. See, *Christology of the Fathers*, editor, Edward R. Hardy, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954. His advice is summarized at the end, “we rightly say that there is one God and one Godhead, and express all the other attributes that befit the divine in the singular.” I might add, that this advice might be thought especially germane if one for certain reasons thinks it advantageous to ascribe *omnipotence* (as in the TPO Model) three times, to each of the Persons, instead of only once to the Godhead. One reason for this move is its fittingness for the expression of God’s love internally expressed by Richard of St. Victor. I am arguing that this love might be more powerfully expressed, if each Person has an omnipotent capacity to express love to the other members of the Trinity in inner-Trinitarian loving (as it is described in connection with the TPO Model). I take it that a necessary condition for appropriate application of *God* is that the being in question possess independent existence of all other beings. If so, then God applies only once in the TPO model, to the Trinitarian God. So on this take, *god* does not apply to each of the divine persons.

²² The Johannine passage, John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” expresses the identity of the Word with God. The Word which was God, *is* God, since the temporal reference frame presents the reader with an account of creation, in terms of which the Word is pictured as a Chief Agent at the beginning of this creative process.

²³ Romans 5:12-19, the pericope where Paul talks about the imputation of sinful natures via the First Adam, and the imputation of righteousness via the Second Adam, Christ.

²⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear...the Lord our God [is] one Lord.” See Augustine, *The Trinity*, pp. 11f., Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1963.

²⁵ In the discussions of this study omnipotence has not been given any precise definition. For a more precise account of the attribute in question, see my, *The Greater-Good Defence, An Essay on the Rationality of Faith*. Seven definitions are offered to answer counterexamples, and I end up with, “Omnipotent₈, For any individual *x* and any individual *y*, and any set of contingent states of affairs, *ssa*, and any time *t*, and any logically possible world *w*, *x* is omnipotent₈ at *t* IFF: (1) *x* can bring about any member of *ssa* which is such that (a) the description of that member does not entail *x* did not bring about the member in question after *t*, (b) *x* does not believe that it would be better to refrain from bringing about the member in question, (c) that member is included in a logically possible world which (given the counterfactuals of freedom which actually obtain; *counterfactuals of freedom*, are contrary-to-fact conditionals which pertain to freedom of choice: e.g., *If God were to place Adam in the Garden, he would freely choose to not eat of the forbidden fruit*, and, *If God were to place Adam in the Garden, he would freely choose to eat of the forbidden fruit*, are two such contrary-to-fact conditionals (CFs) if the state of affairs in question does not yet obtain, and further they are CFs of freedom, if with regard to eating or not eating the forbidden fruit, Adam is significantly free) *x* can strongly or weakly actualize; (2) no being *y* greater in overall power and moral excellence than *x* can be conceived. Note, that the second condition contains the phrase, “and moral excellence.” This takes us beyond the bare notion of “any being is omnipotent,” with which definition 8 starts. So does the addition of the following condition (3),

which is offered for models OSO and TPO. To fit the two models OSO and TPO, this definition would have to add something like, (3) the persons of x , are *omnipotent*²⁶ on condition that their respective willings are compossible with x 's being (which comprises a Trinity of persons). The discussion of *omnipotence* is followed by accounts of omniscience and omnibenevolence, pp. 32-55. London/New York, Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1993.

²⁶ Richard of St. Victor, *The Trinity*, translated by Grover A. Zinn, New York: The Paulist Press, 1979, Book Three, 373-397. Cyril C. Richardson in *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, argues that "If God loves himself, he loves himself, and not one who is begotten of him." (p. 85), New York: Abingdon Press, 1958. I think that his criticism stems from a weak reading of the trinity of Persons in question.

²⁷ Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God*, pp. 177-180.

The concept of love in this paper appears in many different contexts, inner-trinitarian love, love to the creature, etc. A clear understanding of the different senses is indeed a separate study in itself. Martha C. Nussbaum in "Love," in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. V, 842-846 surveys some of the problems the concept presents. C. S. Lewis in *The Four Loves*, gives account of *agape* (self-giving), *phileo* (brotherly), *sturge* (affection) and *eros* (physical, sexual) love. Richard of St. Victor's argument for the Trinity works with premises that incorporate a *perichoretic love*, which I have expanded in terms of *circumincession* and *circuminsession*. But our discussion has left the concept itself largely unparsed. Understandings can go in either of two directions here. On a theological turn, Biblical idiom and metaphor are possible reference points, and on the philosophical, any one or all of its (love's) functions may figure in a careful analysis.

Regarding the theological use, mystery lifts its lofty head. No doubt *perichoretic love* is, in large measure, beyond human understanding, with perhaps much of it *in principle* beyond human ken.

On the philosophical side, one key question is, is divine love free? How about within the Trinity? The Scriptures say that *God is love*. It appears that within the Trinity, each Person could not fail to love each of the other Persons.

But is divine love *free* in its expression to the creature? One could say yes, at least in the sense that God is free to create what he wants, so long as it is compossible with his nature. And so if with regard to universe-making, he is free, he is then also free in his loving, since he could create universe *A* or universe *B*, and so choose to love all that is in *A* or all that is in *B*. He is thus free in his loving according as he is free in his creating. Could he create something that he didn't love? Perhaps, if he has it as his purpose to show to the creature, what it is for him to love, and by contrast not love. He could limit his freedom even with regard to the good things he does if he promises that he will act a certain way in the future (see Richard Swinburne's, *The Christian God*, p. 136).

Whether the love that God has is always *agape love*, if this is taken to mean, *self-giving love*, is another issue that can't be finally and fully drawn here. In what sense would one person of the Trinity be thought to be self-giving to another? *Perichoretic love* might be thought of as self-giving, and very likely analogous to human affection since the Father is spoken of as taking delight in the Son. There is also *intimacy*, in the free-flowing bondedness expressed in circuminsession. There is also *completeness*, if one takes Richard of St. Victor's line (and Swinburne's). It is never-ending, never diminishing and infinite.

²⁸ Some argue that predicates ascribed to humans cannot be univocally ascribed to God, since every predicate one might wish to ascribe would have to be not only quantitatively different when applied to God, but qualitatively different. I am inclined to rejecting the latter contention. See my, *The Greater-Good Defence*, pp. 52, 53.

²⁹ O'Carroll, *The Trinity*, p. 69.

³⁰ The first reference is, John 10:30, and the second, John 14:9.

³¹ This view of the matter, distinguishes between *universal call*, and *effectual call*. Regarding the former, all persons are called in the issuing of the Gospel by announcement and proclamation. Regarding the latter, only the elect are thus called.

³² Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books), 1993, p. 68. Here, I think that we might have access to the energies (workings) of God, and that this access might give us clues as to the essence of God, even if they are only glimpses of this essence. I don't want to say that we don't have a clue as to this essence, since this sort of claim seems to work on the tacit assumption that something is known of God's essence, viz., that we don't have any knowledge of it, for some reason or other. While God himself said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts..." (Isaiah 55), I think that this allows various readings. I would rather say, we might not know very much if anything about God's essence except the basic force of the claim, that we know very little if anything. Orthodox claims that we know nothing about the essence of God can sometimes lead to the contradictory result, we know nothing, but we know this, that we know nothing. But there are Orthodox believers who contend that we know about the essence of God, that it entails the energies of God (though we know nothing else), and that we know what the energies of God are—that is the traditional divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, etc.

³³ See my paper, "The Coherence of Divine Willing and Knowing," *The Symposium of Chinese-American Philosophy and Religious Studies*, Vol. 1, *East & West Philosophy of Religion*, Melville Y. Stewart, Zhang Zhigang, editors, Bethesda: International Scholars Publications, 1998.

³⁴ Genesis 6:3.

³⁵ Ephesians 3:18, 19.

³⁶ Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

³⁹ He did of course create a one-membered universe, where no fall occurs, that universe populated with His Son.

⁴⁰ *Energies* are God's willings for the creature which are actualized in the real world. Gregory says they are what we know of God in terms of his *actions*, in contrast to his *essence*.

⁴¹ The suggestion, of course, is tendentious toward supralapsarianism versus infralapsarianism. Whether this strengthens the viability of the former, is not my interest here. It is rather the concern to work out a detail of theodicy. J. L. Mackie contended that since God has foreknowledge, he would have known those who would have selected only good choices, and so he would have created them. I want to argue here, that perhaps God wanted to create the world, even though he knew a fall would likely occur, because he would thereby be able to manifest his power more splendidly. The counter which raises Paul's question, "Should we sin that grace may abound," is answered, I think in *The Greater-Good Defence*, p. 156, 157. The main point of the rejoinder is, if a fall is necessary in order to make redemption meaningful, then the means works, because this is the only way that it can happen, a means-ends argument works if the means are the only way an end can be achieved that is thought worthwhile. The last part of the paper argues that there is such an end that requires an evil, it is the idea that God wanted to allow a fall, because it manifests his love and power more fully than if no fall had occurred, it is the good of redemption (the Redemption specification), and the good of the deification of humanity. For further development of the R-Specification see my, *The Greater-Good Defence*, Chapter 7, "O Felix Culpa, Redemption, and the Greater-Good Defence," and related expansions of this topic in, *Проблемы Христианской Философии*, "Апологии Исходящие из Существования Большого Блага, Возможные Миры и Возможные Вселенные," and *Искушение*, "Свобода Необходимость и Искупление."

⁴² Romans 8:32 says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

⁴² Romans 8:32 says, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.”

⁴³ I Corinthians 15.

⁴⁴ Dennis Richard Danielson, *Milton's Good God*, p. 204, taken from *Paradise Lost* [12.469-78].

THE TRINITY AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

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The idea that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery suggests one strategy. It is to find something else that defies human comprehension but which we firmly believe in, and use it to speculate about the Trinity. And the obvious—perhaps too obvious—place to look is in ourselves. There are several aspects of human beings that defy human comprehension. One of these is our persistence over time. In this paper I explore the idea that the three Persons stand to each other in a way somewhat analogous to the temporal stages of an enduring person.

INTRODUCTION

“How is it possible for three persons to be one God?” This is not, I take it, merely a request to be shown the strict consistency of the assertion. If that was the problem we would first point out that there are three divine substances only in the sense of *hypostasis* and one divine substance only in the sense of *ousia*. So any charge of *obvious* inconsistency results from failure to disambiguate the term “substance” between “hypostasis” and “ousia.” To establish inconsistency would then require some extra premise connecting substances in the two senses, but this could be met by insisting that the Trinity is a mystery and hence there are no reliable intuitions connecting the different senses of “substance.” For instance any supposed intuition that a person has to be a substance in both senses could be dismissed as an intuition about human persons and so irrelevant to the Trinity.

To be sure the statements of the so-called Athanasian Creed, reflecting St Augustine’s ideas, are more problematic, but they are of doubtful authority, even in the West.¹ In any case I am satisfied that van Inwagen, has shown the formal consistency of even such paradoxical sounding assertions as ‘The

Father is God, the Son is God, the Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods.”²

I do not, then, interpret the “How is the Trinity possible?” question merely as about consistency. Instead I treat it as a request for a hypothetical explanation, and the answers to it—the hypotheses—may be compared, with some being more successful than others. We have, however, no good reason to hold any of the available hypotheses to be true. Hence the hypotheses should be called speculations.³ Speculation is often condemned as frivolous but there are three justifications for speculating about the Trinity. The first is that there is apologetic value in showing that Christianity is supported by human reasoning at its best. The second is that unless we offer answers to “How is the Trinity possible?” questions then this quite central Christian doctrine could become something the faithful believe to be true without actually believing, in much the way that I might believe to be true something Richard Swinburne says in Russian, without believing it—for I do not understand Russian. The third reason is that by speculating and working out just why we reject various speculations we might eventually find a hypothesis which was so much superior to the others that it is no longer mere speculation but a serious hypothesis. I would welcome such a hypothesis about the Trinity, in spite of the apparent arrogance of ever claiming to have found one. For I submit that the real arrogance is for us to infer from *our* inability *now* to understand something that human beings will never understand it—as if no one could ever do better than we can!

Even speculations that are contrary to the teachings of the great Ecumenical Councils can still be valuable if they provide partial understanding. To those who say that the danger is that the speculator will fall in love with the speculation, and come to believe it to be more than mere speculation, I am inclined to reply that little harm will be done by such vanity provided the speculation does not become widespread. In any case we speculators should openly acknowledge that these are just speculations. An alternative way of preventing metaphysical speculation being taken too seriously is to provide several incompatible ones.

When it comes to the Trinity what we are looking for is a way of combining the unity of God with a multiplicity of divine persons. This suggests two ways of providing a speculation about the Trinity. One is to start with the three divine persons and then explain how they are one God. The other is to start with the one God and explain how there are three persons.

If we start with a community of divine persons, we can then moderate the resulting Tritheism until we reach a point where we say there are not three gods but just one God. We might do so by insisting that the relations of loving knowledge between the divine persons are essential. This corresponds to one tenable interpretation of the *ousia/hypostasis* distinction. *Ousia/hypostasis* is substance in the sense of *that capable of existing by itself*, which is not

composed of parts capable of existing by themselves.⁴ *Hypostasis* is substance in the different sense of *that which has properties and stands in relations*. Something all of whose parts have essential relations with other parts will be a single indivisible *ousia* because none of the parts can exist by itself. But its parts are distinct hypostases.

My aim in this paper, however, is start the other way, initially thinking of God as like the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” a single divine person. And I am looking for parts of this one divine person, which are themselves, divine persons.

So how do we proceed? The idea that the doctrine of the Trinity is mysterious in the sense of (currently) defying human comprehension suggests one strategy for speculation. It is to find some other mystery that we firmly believe in, and use it to speculate about the Trinity. And the obvious place to look is in ourselves. There are several aspects of human beings that are mysterious. One of these is our endurance over time. And it is this that I shall exploit, although what I say will turn out to be compatible with a doctrine of divine eternity. So first let us discuss what is mysterious about our own endurance, or, in other words, what is mysterious about personal identity over time.

ENDURANCE OVER TIME

The problem of endurance, or personal identity, is that of trying to understand what makes one stage of a human being, say Felicity aged thirty, the very same person as a later stage, say Felicity aged fifty. The majority of contemporary English speaking philosophers would agree that the following four conditions are jointly sufficient for Felicity aged fifty to be the same person as Felicity aged thirty.

- (1) That the stages be connected by intermediate stages each one of which closely resembles its predecessor both physically and psychologically;
- (2) That each stage is the principal cause of the next stage being the way it is;
- (3) That there be no temporal or spatial gaps in the sequence of stages being considered;
- (4) There is no person-splitting, that is, no non-overlapping stages have the same preceding stage (Likewise there is no fusion of persons, that is no non-overlapping stages have the same subsequent stage.)

A minority view, championed for instance by Richard Swinburne, is that these conditions provide very good evidence that Felicity aged fifty is the same person as Felicity aged thirty but that we mean something more by

saying it is the same person than merely satisfying these conditions. We may usefully compare this gap between satisfying (1) to (4) and being stages of the same person with the gap between a complete atom-by-atom physical description of a human being and a psychological description.

To illustrate the gap between the widely agreed sufficient conditions and being the same person we require a somewhat unusual situation. One that comes to mind is reincarnation. In fact I became more not less skeptical of reincarnation after examining the evidence. But let us suppose there were evidence that those who have never reached real maturity are reborn. For simplicity let us ignore the physical aspects of a person and concentrate on the psychological ones, and let us suppose that those who have lived before have quite vivid memories of their former lives and that very many character traits are determined by those of the immature person who died. Suppose also that there is no fission, that is no two persons alive at the same time with the memories of the very same former life, and no fusion, that is, no person has memories of two simultaneous former lives. We also have to suppose some sort of *law of karma* that ensures the way a person is in youth is caused by the way the remembered person was at the end of the previous life. None of this do I believe but God could have made the world that way. And if God had then we would have good evidence for reincarnation. A skeptic could have insisted, however, that instead of a single person with several consecutive lives we have in each life a new person who has the good or bad fortune to have been formed in the likeness of the person who just died. There would be a dispute, then, between those who believed in reincarnation and the skeptic. And this would not be a merely verbal dispute. It would matter. For instance the sort of sympathy we have for someone who suffers for their own fault is different from that we have for the innocent. Likewise if in this life I suffer because of what I did in a former one you should have a somewhat different attitude towards me than you would if some other person bequeathed to me a load of sorrow.

There are a number of different responses to this. One is to identify the person with some unchanging Self or soul. That is unsatisfactory, I think, because it has the consequence that you are not affected by what you do, even when you are fully responsible. The once popular idea that we have souls that are stained by sin nicely exhibits the inconsistency between the belief in the soul as unchanging and the belief that it is affected by what we do.

More satisfactory is the thesis that to be the same person is to be the same organism. What this amounts to is the recognition that there is a similar problem of how organisms can be the same even though they change. Now we would be making intellectual progress if we could defend the position that the endurance of living organisms is the very same mystery as the endurance of persons. Unfortunately contemporary science strongly suggests that this is not the same mystery. For in the case of an organism there is no mystery at

all. Once we understand what all the constituents are doing then we can understand why it is the same organism. Yet the existence of the gap between the supposed sufficient conditions and personal identity shows that this is not the case for personal identity.

I submit that whatever response we make we will have to grant that something mysterious is going on. My suggestion is that for genuine personal identity, the causal condition must be strengthened, so that the later stages depend *essentially* on the earlier stages as well as (or instead of) causally. Thus not even God could bring about the later stage without the earlier stages. The attempt to do so would result in something different. Another way of putting this is to say that not merely human persons but even their stages are essentially historical beings.

Having suggested one way of responding to the mystery of the endurance of a human being as the same person we may then exploit this to give an account of the Trinity thus answering the “How is the Trinity possible” question. It is possible in whatever way it is possible for one stage of a human being to be the very same person as another stage. In fact if we were to consider the hypothetical situation in which the evidence for reincarnation was much better than it actually is, we can see that the various lives of a given person are themselves just like persons as we ordinarily think of them, already providing a loose analogy with the Trinity.

A SPECULATION CONCERNING THE TRINITY

If we start by thinking of God as a whole as a person then we may think of the three divine Persons as like person–stages, or like the distinct lives of a reincarnating person, except that the divine Persons exist simultaneously rather than one after the other. What makes them all parts of the one person who is God is that the relations between them, by which the Second Person depends on the First, and so on, are taken to require essential dependence, just as in the previously mentioned explication of the *ousia/hypostasis* distinction. But the speculation goes further and suggests that it is just this sort of essential dependence that is characteristic of the relations between stages of a person’s life, or, in the hypothetical case of reincarnation, between the lives of the one person.

I can think of four objections to this speculation, which I will attempt to answer. The first is that persons are not, the objector says, processes and so do not have stages. Hence there is no problem of how these stages are related.

The second objection is that there is too much difference between stages arranged one after the other and lives that are simultaneous, as those of the three Persons of the Trinity must be. (Here I am assuming for convenience that the term “simultaneity” covers the special case of co–eternity.)

The third objection is that the love of one stage of a person for another is the excellence of proper self-love but that this is not the further excellence of love of another that the three Divine Persons possess.

The fourth objection is that we all depend essentially on God, but are not thereby parts of God.

The first objection was to say that we are not processes and hence have no stages. In reply I first consider the hypothetical case of reincarnation in which we surely can distinguish the different lives and treat them as stages. Next I distinguish between two kinds of parts something might have, a distinction very like the *ousia/hypostasis* one. On the one hand by a part we might mean a part capable of existing independently. In this sense of part I am denying that the stages of a person are parts for I am insisting that, with the exception of any first stage, every stage depends essentially on its predecessors and so is not capable of existing independently. But there is another sense of the term "part," one in which we may stipulate that if x has something else y as a part there must be complementary part z . Such complementary parts are not necessarily capable of existing by themselves. They are, if you like, abstractions. On the account I am proposing person stages are abstractions of that sort, for they cannot exist by themselves. So although I agree with those who would deny that a person has parts in the first sense, I insist that we may coherently talk of a person having stages that are parts in the second sense, with clear criteria as to what is true or false of them. And that supports the claim that there are person stages.

The second objection was that we should not attempt an analogy between person stages one after another and simultaneous parts of God. My response to this is that the idea of essential dependence does not require that the dependent be later than what it depends on. Indeed other examples of such dependence are simultaneous, such as the dependence of the corner of the table on the table.

The third objection was that the love of one stage of a person for another is not the love of others but love of self. This may be so, but it is the simultaneity of the three Divine Persons which enables there to be love between them, which is just like the love of another.

The fourth objection was that we all depend essentially on God but are not thereby parts of God. To this I reply that although essential dependence of one stage on another is a necessary condition for two stages to be stages of the very same person, it is not sufficient. In addition we still have the requirement that each stage be similar to the previous one. What counts as similarity here? It suffices to note that with the exception of Jesus no human being has had a perfectly loving nature and hence, with that exception, the similarity condition does not hold.

A SCIENCE FICTION ANALOGY

I now provide a science fiction example in order to supplement the above discussion.⁵ In the year 2020 Rachel, aged 30 makes a time-machine and goes back with her friend Rebecca, then aged 40 to the year 2010. They both farewell their good friend Ruth, aged 50. Rebecca as she gets out of the machine changes her name to "Ruth," and Rachel changes hers to "Rebecca." Rebecca, formerly Rachel, is then aged 30: time-machine travel to the past does not rejuvenate! And her friend, Ruth, formerly Rebecca is aged 40. Ten years pass in the normal way, so Rebecca, formerly Rachel is 40 and Ruth, formerly Rebecca, is 50. And the women now called "Rachel," "Rebecca" and "Ruth" are the women mentioned at the beginning of the example. The whole process could be repeated in the year 2030 with two of them going back to 2020. In each ten year period they would age thirty years each.

In this science fiction example Rachel, Rebecca and Ruth may be described as three stages of one time-traveler. But they may also be described in the year 2020 as three distinct women of different ages and consequently with somewhat different personalities. This example shows how three stages of one person can interact as a community of three. Now to avoid circular explanations we must assume that an older "sister" is incapable of telling a younger "sister" what she remembers will happen, and no one can remember what will happen to her when she is older. Subject to those constraints there is no incoherence in the account given, and furthermore it is clear that the three can love each other as sisters in a way that is not like self-love.

This analogy should not be taken too seriously. Their point is to persuade us that relations of essential dependence between persons who exist at the same time could result in them being like stages of the one person and yet in a quite clear sense three distinct persons.

CONCLUSION

Starting with the idea of God as a single divine person we can use the mystery of personal identity over time, together with the analogy of the time travelers, to explain how there can be three divine Persons who interact with each like distinct persons and yet are one. Notice that although on this hypothesis God as a whole is a person God is not a person in addition to the three Divine Persons just as a human being is not a person in addition to her or his stages.

NOTES

¹ The Fourth Lateran Council has some statements reminiscent of the Athanasian Creed. But these like the Athanasian Creed and like St Augustine's own thinking are arguably the result of combining the controversial philosophical thesis of divine simplicity with Christian orthodoxy. For a discussion see Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism" in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr., (eds.) *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, 21–47.

² Peter van Inwagen, "And yet there are not three Gods, but one God" in T.V. Morris (ed.) *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.

³ Here I am using the word "speculation" in its contemporary sense and not just to mean "reflection upon what we already know."

⁴ By parts I mean *proper parts*, that is, parts that are not identical to the whole. Notice that as I have defined it an *ousia* can have another *ousia* as a part. Thus both God and the sum of God plus creation might be *ousia* if creation cannot exist by itself. I shall say something is a simple *ousia* if it has no proper part that is an *ousia*. I shall be supposing that God is simple not in the sense of having no parts whatever but in the sense of being a simple *ousia*.

⁵ Brian Leftow, who unfortunately was not well enough to be at the conference, has a similar example of the "Rockettes." See his "A Latin Trinity."

THREE PERSONS IN ONE BEING: ON ATTEMPTS TO SHOW THAT THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS SELF-CONTRADICTIONARY

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Enemies of the Church have frequently contended that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not only false, but violates various elementary logical principles. In this essay, I show that, on one understanding of the doctrine, this charge is unfounded.

Enemies of the Church have frequently contended that two of its central doctrines are not only false but violate various elementary logical principles. These two doctrines are, of course, the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word and the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. I shall investigate the contention that the doctrine of the Trinity is logically self-contradictory.

I shall proceed as follows. I shall try to imagine a way of stating the doctrine of the Trinity that has the following feature: when the doctrine is stated in this way, it can be *shown* not to be self-contradictory. I shall leave the following question to theologians (for I am a philosopher, not a theologian): Is what I describe as “a way of stating the doctrine of the Trinity” properly so described—or should it be called a way of *misstating* the doctrine of the Trinity? I claim only this: a strong case can be made for the thesis that the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity I shall propose does succeed in being a statement of what has historically been called ‘the doctrine of the Trinity’; and an even stronger case can be made for the thesis that this formulation is *consistent* with historical orthodoxy. Even if these theses are false, they are, in my view, plausible enough to be worthy of a considered refutation.

My project, therefore, belongs to Christian apologetic. It is a Christian philosopher’s attempt to meet a certain kind of philosophical attack on Christian belief. Whether my attempt at apologetic in fact *distorts* Christian

belief is a point on which I humbly (and sensibly) defer to trained theologians. In matters of speculative theology—and particularly when the question at issue is whether certain theological speculations are in accord with historical orthodoxy—theologians must sit in judgment over mere philosophers. (Just as, in my view, bishops and councils must sit in judgment over theologians.) I claim only one kind of authority that is denied to theologians: I am the ultimate arbiter of what my own words mean. If a theologian tells me that my proposed way of stating the doctrine of the Trinity is wrong (that is, that what I have proposed as a way of stating “the doctrine of the Trinity” has implications inconsistent with what the Church has always understood by “the doctrine of the Trinity”), I allow myself only one defense: “If I had said what you think I’ve said, you’d be right; but I didn’t say what you think I said.”

Now a qualification. When I said I should propose a way of stating the doctrine of the Trinity, I spoke loosely. What I am going to propose a statement or formulation of is a *part* of the doctrine of the Trinity, the part that is alleged to violate certain principles of logic. In one sense, there can be no more important questions of Trinitarian theology than those raised by the *filioque*. These questions are important because they have consequences for the immensely important task of restoring Christian unity. But these questions would not interest those enemies of the Church who attack the doctrine of the Trinity on logical grounds. They attack aspects of the doctrine that are common to the Eastern and the Western understandings of the Trinity (if indeed there is still any difference between Eastern and Western understandings of the Trinity). Their attacks are not directed at theses concerning the relations the persons of the Trinity bear to one another, but are directed, so to speak, at the persons themselves. But it is time to turn from the abstract to the concrete and to see how the attacks I am going to consider have been formulated. I am going to concentrate on attacks made by present-day unbelievers, but these attacks do not differ in their essential content from those made by Socinians in the seventeenth century, and I should be surprised if similar objections to Trinitarianism had not been raised by Jewish and Muslim philosophers and theologians—although I cannot speak to this question of my own knowledge. The essential points made in these arguments, moreover, were known to the great Trinitarian theologians of the first millennium, and to the philosophers and theologians of the Latin Middle ages.

I will consider two arguments. Here is the first.

The term ‘God’ applies without qualification to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is not the Father. Hence, there are at least three Gods.

We may compare this argument with the following argument:

The term 'king' applies without qualification to Gaspar, to Melchior, and to Balthasar. Gaspar is not Melchior; Melchior is not Balthasar; Balthasar is not Gaspar. Hence, there are at least three kings, and we may note that the former argument and the latter appear to be logically identical, and that the second is certainly logically valid. But monotheism is essential to Christian belief, and indeed, to the doctrine of the Trinity; therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is logically self-contradictory. For this argument to be valid, the word 'God' must be understood as what linguists call a count-noun, that is a noun that, like 'king,' has a plural form (and in languages that have an indefinite article, can follow the indefinite article). But this seems to be so: We say, "There is one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" and "Our God is a God of love" and "The doctrine of the Trinity does not imply that there are three Gods"; and each of these sentences is grammatically correct.

Here is the second argument:

The Father is God. The Son is God. Hence, the Father is the Son.

We may compare this argument with the following argument:

The capital of Russia is Moscow. The largest city in Russia is Moscow.

Hence, the capital of Russia is the largest city in Russia,

and we may note that the former argument and the latter appear to be logically identical, and that the second is certainly logically valid. But it is essential to the doctrine of the Trinity that the Father is not the Son; therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity is logically self-contradictory. For this argument to be valid, the word 'God' must be understood as a proper name—like 'Moscow' or 'Zeus' or 'Socrates.' But this seems to be so: We say, "O God make speed to save us" and "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God"; and each of these sentences is grammatically correct.

We have noted that these two arguments presuppose two different grammatical functions for the word 'God.' But this does not imply that at most one of the two arguments is logically valid, for the word 'God' does function both as a count-noun and as a proper name. In every language I know of, a proper name can function, or one might say, be forced to function as a count-noun. (Here is an example used by the German philosopher Frege: Trieste is no Vienna.) But the use of God as a count-noun in the first argument is not a case of a proper name being *forced* to function as a count-noun. No force is required when we choose to employ 'God' as a count-noun. It is part of the meaning of 'God' that it has a dual grammatical function, that it is syntactically ambiguous as it were: it can function both as a count-noun and as a proper name. And if we suppose that 'God' functions as a count-noun at each of its occurrences in the first argument, the premises of that argument seem to be true. If, moreover, we suppose that 'God' functions as a proper name at each of its occurrences in the second argument, the premises of *that* argument seem to be true. (The fact that God has a proper name in the

more usual sense—as we learn from Exodus 3:14—does not affect the point that the word ‘God’ often *functions* as a proper name. I may mention in this connection that Professor Peter Geach has argued that ‘God’ is never a proper name, owing to the fact that, in translations from one language to another, the word is itself translated—the word that means ‘God’ in the original language is replaced with a word of the other language that means ‘God’—and is not merely phonetically adapted. A contrastive example will make Geach’s point clear. The English word ‘God’ is a true translation of the Russian word ‘Bog,’ to which it bears no phonetic resemblance and to which it is etymologically unrelated. By way of contrast: the English proper name ‘Moscow’ is not in anything like the same sense a translation of ‘Moskva’; it is merely an adaptation of the name Russians have given to their largest city, a phonetic adaptation that was made because it is easier for someone whose tongue is accustomed to the vowel-and-consonant patterns of English to say ‘Moscow’ than to say ‘Moskva.’ Whether or not this argument of Geach’s is cogent, its target is not the thesis that I have endorsed. I have not said that ‘God’ is a proper name as ‘Yahweh’ is a proper name, but only that in some contexts it functions logically like a proper name. More exactly: I have not *said* this; I have said only the second of the above arguments depends on the word’s so functioning, and that examination of the way the word is used seems to endorse the thesis that it can so function.)

Now what shall we say of these two arguments? I have heard of (but cannot cite) theologians who are, in effect, willing to concede that our two arguments are logically valid and that their premises are true. They concede, therefore, that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is internally inconsistent; and they go on to say that it is nevertheless to be believed. Having made these concessions, they proceed to deprecate ‘merely human logic.’ Their point (so I have been told) is not that the doctrine is not inconsistent but seems to be inconsistent owing to the deficiencies of merely human logic; it is rather that it is only because of the deficiencies of merely human logic that inconsistency (at least in theology) seems objectionable. This position has (to be gentle) little to recommend it. If one maintains that something is to be believed, one thereby commits oneself to the thesis that that thing is true, for to believe something and to believe that it is true are one and the same thing. And nothing that is true can be internally inconsistent. If a theological doctrine or political ideology or scientific theory comprises three statements, and if that doctrine or ideology or theory is true, then its three constituent statements must be individually true. We might put the matter this way: every “part” of anything that is true must also be true, and anything that is true is consistent with anything else that is true—and an inconsistent doctrine or ideology or theory is one such that some of its parts are inconsistent with others of its parts. Those who are willing to believe what is logically inconsistent have

failed to take account of the logically elementary fact that a truth cannot be inconsistent with a truth.

I have said that I could find no theologian who has actually said that inconsistencies were to be believed. Professor Geach claims to be able to identify (although he does not provide explicit citations of) certain medieval Latin thinkers who held a closely related thesis: that there are bodies of truth—just those that comprise the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation—that somehow constitute exceptions to logically valid principles or reasoning. These medievals, Geach says, appended the following warning to their statements of certain rules of logical inference: *Haec regula habet instantiam in mysterio Sanctae Trinitatis*. (Here is a gloss: WARNING: Do not use this rule when the subject-matter of your reasoning is the mystery of the Holy Trinity; applied to that subject-matter, the rule can license the inference of false conclusions from true premises.)

To say this, or anything like this, is to misunderstand the concept of logic. Nothing is, or could be, above, beyond, or outside the province of logic. The idea does not make sense. And, certainly, it is blasphemous to say that any part of Christian theology is above, beyond, or outside the province of logic. Jesus Christ, in addition to being the Way and the Life, is the Truth. In him there is no darkness at all. In him there is no falsehood. The faith we have from him, and from the Holy Spirit whom he has sent to us, is therefore entirely true, true in every part. And nothing that is entirely true can be above, beyond, or outside the province of logic, for (as I have said) a truth cannot be inconsistent with a truth. If, *per impossibile*, there were some doctrine, some ideology, some theory, that was above, beyond, or outside the province of logic, it would not be entirely true; for what is entirely true is logically internally consistent, and what is logically internally consistent conforms to the rules of logic and cannot therefore be said to be above, beyond, or outside the province of logic.

To say this, however, is not to say that Christian doctrine (or, for that matter, a scientific theory like quantum mechanics; the suggestion has been made that quantum mechanics has just this feature) cannot be in violation of principles of reasoning that are generally *believed* to be logically correct. It is to say that Christians are committed to the thesis that if an essential Christian doctrine violates some principle of reasoning, then that principle is not logically correct, however many reputable professional logicians believe it to be logically correct. Logic—and this statement pertains to the *essence* of logic—makes a universal claim. It claims to apply to the whole of the Real—and nothing has a securer place in the Real than God, who alone can say, “I should be real if nothing else was.” (The Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong believed there to be—in a sense of ‘to be’ he was never able adequately to explain—things that lay outside the Real, and he believed that some of these violated the principles of logic. He thereby denied the universal

claim of logic, whose scope he confined to the Real. He in fact denied that, "I pertain to the whole of the Real" is a claim to universality. His philosophy, however, seems to me to be nonsense, and—I say—unless one is prepared to follow Meinong into nonsense, one must accept the claim of logic to be of absolutely universal applicability.)

I said I should propose a way of stating the doctrine of the Trinity that was demonstrably consistent. I am not the first to have proposed to do this. Certainly various heretics have. Very roughly speaking, their heresies fall under two headings: modalism and tritheism. Modalism is the heresy that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three modes in which the one God is known by us or presents himself to us—three faces that God shows us, so to speak, as God's Ape does in the *Inferno*. Tritheism is, of course, the heresy that there are three Gods: that God the Father is one God, God the Son another God, and God the Holy Spirit a third God. I shall take it for granted that everyone present will agree that modalism is a heresy. It might be thought equally clear that tritheism was a heresy. ("Hear, O Israel, Yahweh our God is one Yahweh.") But there is a modern attempt at a demonstrably consistent statement of the doctrine of the Trinity—at least I should be willing to say that its consistency was demonstrable—according to which there are three Gods, and its author's defense of its historical orthodoxy is well thought out and not simply to be dismissed. (I have in mind Professor Swinburne's important essay on the Trinity, "Could There Be More Than One God?") But whether Professor Swinburne's account of the Trinity is, or is consistent with, historical orthodoxy is a subtle question, and one that is not, in the end, to be answered by a philosopher. What I can do, as a philosopher, is to exhibit the consequences of his theory—subject, of course, to correction by Professor Swinburne, whose authority to contend that I have got him wrong and whose authority to contend that I have made a mistake in reasoning are both unassailable. I shrink from the risks implicit in criticizing the work of a philosopher who is not only alive but is present as I speak, and will say nothing in detail about his views. I have mentioned these views only to make the point that the question whether tritheism is a heresy is a subtle question—and to make the related point that the question "What, exactly, *is* tritheism?" is likewise a subtle question. I am happy to make these points because, if any charge of heresy were to be lodged against my own speculations concerning the Trinity, it would certainly be that I have fallen into some form of tritheism. No one—I certainly hope this is so—could reasonably accuse me of having embraced modalism in any form.

My attempt to state the doctrine of the Trinity (and I do intend presently to get round to doing it) rests on the contention that certain rules of logical inference that are commonly supposed to be valid are not in fact valid, that these rules must be replaced by other rules, rules that *are* valid, and that the doctrine of the Trinity does not violate any valid rule of logical inference.

That part of logic whose rules the doctrine of the Trinity is in violation of (or is in violation of if the two arguments I set out earlier are valid) is the logic of *identity*. According to standard textbook logic, the logic we have from Frege and Russell, there is a relation called identity. This relation is defined by two properties. First, everything whatever bears this relation to itself. Secondly, this relation forces indiscernability. That is to say, if a thing x bears identity to a thing y , then whatever is true of x is true of y and whatever is true of y is true of x . From these two defining properties of identity (it is easily shown) two other important properties of identity immediately follow: identity is *symmetrical* (that is, if a thing x bears the relation of identity to a thing y , then y bears the relation of identity to x), and identity is transitive (that is, if x bears identity to y and y bears identity to z , then x bears identity to z). These properties of identity entail the validity of four principles of reasoning or logical rules. In stating these rules, I will use the words 'is identical with' instead of 'bears the relation of identity to.'

The rule of *Reflexivity* tells us that if we are engaged in a piece of reasoning, and if a name like 'Ivan the Terrible' occurs in this reasoning, and if this name (unlike, say, 'Zeus') actually designates something, we may introduce the sentence formed by surrounding the phrase 'is identical with' with two occurrences of that name into our reasoning. For example, if the name 'Ivan' occurs in our reasoning, and if 'Ivan' designates something, we may introduce into our reasoning the sentence 'Ivan is identical with Ivan.' This rule, moreover, applies not only to names but also to any phrase that purports to designate a single thing; 'the first czar' for example: Reflexivity licenses us to include in any piece of reasoning the sentence 'the first czar is identical with the first czar.'

In stating the rule "Reflexivity," I had to strain to state it generally (and a logician will tell you that I did not really succeed, since I said nothing about what logicians call "variables," a point I will concede). In the sequel, I will not even attempt to give general statement of the rules whose validity follows from the properties of identity; I shall instead proceed by example and illustration.

The rule called *Leibniz's Law* or *The Indiscernibility of Identicals* (note that I did not say "The Identity of Indiscernibles"!) allows us to introduce the following sentence into our reasoning:

If Moscow is identical with the city in which the Kremlin stands, then Moscow is populous if and only if the city in which the Kremlin stands is populous.

In this example the first or 'if' part of the statement is true, and the predicate 'is populous' in fact applies to the one thing that is both Moscow and the city in which the Kremlin stands. But I must point out that logic is in a certain sense blind to truth, and that Leibniz's Law would allow us to introduce the following sentence into our reasoning:

If Helsinki is identical with the capital of Japan, then Helsinki is a moon of Jupiter if and only if the capital of Japan is a moon of Jupiter.

No doubt no sane person would *want* to introduce this sentence into any piece of reasoning; but a madman who did so would be reasoning logically—something madmen are often very good at. (And, anyway, when you think about it, isn't it *true* that *if* Helsinki is identical with the capital of Japan, then Helsinki is a moon of Jupiter if and only if the capital of Japan is a moon of Jupiter?)

The rule called *Symmetry* (its validity can be proved, given the validity of Reflexivity and Leibniz's Law) licenses inferences like these:

Cicero is identical with Tully; *hence*, Tully is identical with Cicero

Peter the Great is identical with Catherine the Great; *hence*, Catherine the Great is identical with Peter the Great.

The rule called *Transitivity* (its validity can be proved, given the validity of Reflexivity and Leibniz's Law) licenses inferences like these:

Byzantium is identical with Constantinople; Constantinople is identical with Istanbul; *hence*, Byzantium is identical with Istanbul

Turgenev is identical with Dostoevski; Dostoevski is identical with the author of *Anna Karenina*; *hence*, Turgenev is identical with the author of *Anna Karenina*.

Infinitely many other rules of inference involving the phrase 'is identical with' can be proved valid given the defining properties of identity. Some of them are even interesting and important; Euclid's Law, or the Substitution of Identicals, for example, which allows us to infer 'Tolstoy was excommunicated' from the two premises 'The author of *Anna Karenina* was excommunicated' and 'Tolstoy is identical with the author of *Anna Karenina*,' but one must make an end somewhere, and perhaps at least the most general features of the logic of identity are now reasonably clear. And this logic of identity is all but universally regarded as an established part of logic. "How, ask the proponents of the validity of these rules, could they fail? Consider Transitivity. Suppose that the sentence 'Byzantium is identical with Constantinople' is true; if this sentence is true, that must be because there is a single thing, a certain city, that bears the two names 'Byzantium' and 'Constantinople.' And if 'Constantinople is identical with Istanbul' is true, that can only be because there is a single thing, a certain city that bears the two names 'Constantinople' and 'Istanbul.' It obviously follows that this "certain city" bears the two names 'Byzantium' and 'Istanbul' (we have said so), and that, therefore, 'Byzantium is identical with Istanbul' is true.

Now consider the first of the two anti-Trinitarian arguments I set out a moment ago. This argument depends on the idea of number; the idea expressed by the question "How many?" Number is explained in terms of identity. The proposition that there is exactly one phoenix can be expressed this way:

Something x is a phoenix and any phoenix is identical with x .

(For this sentence would be false if there were no phoenixes, and it would be false if there were two or more phoenixes: it is true in just exactly the remaining case, the case in which the number of phoenixes is one.) The proposition that Mars has exactly two moons can be expressed this way:

Something x is a Martian moon and something y is a Martian moon and x is not identical with y and any Martian moon is identical with either x or y .

If we delete the last clause from this sentence (thus):

Something x is a Martian moon and something y is a Martian moon and x is not identical with y ,

the result is a way of expressing the proposition that there are *at least* two Martian moons. (The truncated sentence is false if Mars has no moons or has only one; it is true otherwise.) Now consider the sentence

Something x is a God and something y is a God and something z is a God and x is not identical with y and x is not identical with z and y is not identical with z .

This sentence says that there are at least three Gods. Now suppose someone says these things:

The Father is a God

The Son is a God

The Holy Spirit is a God

The Father is not identical with the Son

The Father is not identical with the Holy Spirit

The Son is not identical with the Holy Spirit.

If these six things are true, then it would seem that we have our ' x ,' our ' y ' and our ' z ,' and it would seem, therefore to follow that there are at least three Gods. And are these six things true? Well, I concede that it might be hard to get a Christian to give his unqualified assent to any of them. Christians who speak a language that uses the indefinite article are likely, to say the least, to feel uncomfortable saying 'The Father is a God.' But consider: they will want to say the following two things: 'The Father is God' and 'God is a God'; does that not commit them to the truth of 'The Father is a God,' however reluctant they may be actually to utter these words? As to the final three sentences, perhaps these two will make the Christian uncomfortable. But they will certainly want to say these two things:

The following is true of the Son: that he is begotten of the Father

The following is not true of the Father: that he is begotten of the Father.

And it follows from these two sentences by Leibniz's Law that the Father is not identical with the Son: for if the Father were identical with the Son, then everything that was true of the Father would also be true of the Son. It would seem, therefore, to follow by the logic of identity from things all Christians assent to that there are at least three Gods. And, since it is an essential element in the doctrine of the Trinity that there is one God, and one only, a logical

contradiction can be deduced by the logic of identity from the doctrine of the Trinity. What I have just done, of course, is to present our first argument in a form which makes its reliance on the standard logic of identity explicit. This was a rather complex undertaking. To present our second anti-Trinitarian argument in this form, however, is simplicity itself:

The Father is identical with God

The Son is identical with God

Hence, by Symmetry, God is identical with the Son

Hence, by Transitivity, the Father is identical with the Son.

And this conclusion certainly contradicts the doctrine of the Trinity. For one thing, as we have seen, it would imply—given that the Father begets the Son and given the standard logic of identity—that the Son begets the Father. For another, it would imply that there was a single thing for which ‘the Father’ and ‘the Son’ were alternative names—as there is a single thing for which ‘Constantinople’ and ‘Istanbul’ are alternative names—and this is modalism. Might the Christian respond by simply denying the premises, by simply denying that the Father is identical with God and that the Son is identical with God? (The Christian might appeal to Leibniz’s Law to establish this: God comprises all three persons of the Holy Trinity; the Father does not comprise all three persons of the Holy Trinity; hence, the Father is not identical with God.) But this response leads to “counting” problems, like those on which our first argument turns. The Father is, as we have seen, a God. And God is certainly a God. Therefore, if the Father is not identical with God, there is something x that is a God and there is something y that is a God and x is not identical with y . That is to say: there are at least two Gods.

It has long seemed to me that the problems our two anti-Trinitarian arguments raise are insoluble, if the standard logic of identity is correct.

That is, it has seemed to me that the doctrine of the Trinity is self-contradictory if the standard logic of identity is correct. I wish, therefore, to explore the possibility of rejecting the standard logic of identity. But it is not possible to reject the standard logic of identity root and branch. There is obviously much that is right about it. I wish therefore, to investigate the possibility of a logic that preserves what is obviously right about the standard logic of identity, but which differs from the standard logic in a way that does not allow the deduction of a contradiction from the doctrine of the Trinity.

The logic of identity I shall propose turns on the idea that there is not one relation of identity but many. Thus, I do not so much propose a logic of identity according to which the rules governing identity I have laid out above are invalid as a logic according to which they are vacuous: I deny that there is one all-encompassing relation of identity for them to govern. When I say that there is no one all-encompassing relation of identity, I mean that there is no relation that is both universally reflexive and forces indiscernibility. When I speak of “many relations of identity,” I have in mind relations like these:

“being the same horse as,” “being the same artifact as,” and “being the same apple as.” I call these *relations of relative identity*, since the use of any of them in an assertion of sameness relativizes that sameness to a *kind*; it is for that reason that each of the phrases I have mentioned contains a count-noun like ‘horse’ or ‘artifact’ or ‘apple.’ Thus, one might call the relations expressed by the phrases ‘horse-identity,’ ‘artifact-identity,’ and ‘apple-identity.’ In pieces of reasoning whose validity turns on relations of relative identity, count-nouns will occur only in phrases like the ones I have used as examples—‘horse’ will occur only in the phrase ‘is the same horse as,’ and so on. Having said this, I qualify it: I will allow predicates not of this form to occur if their form is that illustrated by ‘is a horse.’ I allow this because predicates of the this sort can be regarded as mere abbreviations for phrases of the sort I allow “officially.” For example, ‘Bucephalus is a horse’ can be understood as a mere abbreviation for ‘Bucephalus is the same horse as Bucephalus.’ Since ‘Bucephalus is the same horse as Bucephalus’ expresses (so I contend) the thought expressed by the ordinary sentence ‘Bucephalus is a horse,’ it is clear that the logic of relations of relative identity must have no rule corresponding to the rule Reflexivity. If we had such a rule, or, rather, if we had a separate rule of reflexivity for every relation of relative identity, this would have disastrous consequences. For example, the ‘horse’-rule would allow us to introduce the sentence ‘Tolstoy is the same horse as Tolstoy’ into our reasoning. And we do not want that, for that sentence says that Tolstoy is a horse.

I also decline to allow anything corresponding to Leibniz’s Law—that is to supply each relation of relative identity with its own little version of Leibniz’s Law. The logic of relative identity thus does not give us its permission to introduce into our reasoning the sentence

If Bucephalus is the same horse as Alexander’s favorite horse, then Bucephalus was fond of apples if and only if Alexander’s favorite horse was fond of apples.

If the logic of relative identity does not give us its permission to introduce this sentence into our reasoning, neither does it forbid us to do so. I myself think that this sentence expresses a truth, even a necessary truth, and I am therefore perfectly willing to introduce it into my reasoning (and would be equally willing to introduce any sentence built round ‘is the same horse as’ in the same way), but I would justify this willingness by an appeal to what I believe to be features of horse-identity, features that (in my view) may not be shared by all other relations of relative identity.

I in fact allow only two logical rules to govern reasoning about relations of relative identity. First, Symmetry, which is illustrated by this inference:

Bucephalus is the same horse as Alexander’s favorite horse;

hence, Alexander’s favorite horse is the same horse as Bucephalus.

Secondly, Transitivity:

Byzantium is the same city as Constantinople; Constantinople is the same city as Istanbul; *hence*, Byzantium is the same city as Istanbul.

(In the standard logic of identity, Symmetry and Transitivity are derived rules; in the logic of relative identity, they must stand on their own.) Now let us apply these ideas to the doctrine of the Trinity. Suppose we have the two relations of relative identity:

is the same being (substance, *ousia*) as

is the same person as.

I shall not attempt to explain what either of these phrases means in any philosophically satisfactory way, but I shall make two remarks. First, I use 'being' for whatever it is that "there is one of" in the Trinity, and I use 'person' for what it is that "there are three of" in the Trinity. Secondly, there has been some debate about the relation between 'person,' the technical term of Trinitarian theology, and 'person,' the word of ordinary speech. Without attempting to resolve this debate, I will say that I regard '*x* is the same person as *y*' as meaning more or less the same as '*x* is someone and *y* is someone—but not someone else.' But nothing I shall say here depends on whether I am right about this. Now it might be thought that all this apparatus of relative identity does not enable us to escape the force of the skeptic's arguments. Consider the second argument. May the skeptic, even if he has only relations of relative identity at his disposal, not present the following argument?

The Father is the same person as God

The Son is the same person as God

Hence, God is the same person as the Son

Hence, The Father is the same person as the Son.

And is it not true that the Father and the Son are both the same person as God? One way to answer this argument might be to say that strictly 'person' applies only to the three "persons" of the Trinity, but does not apply to the Godhead. I will not say anything of this sort. It seems to me that in Holy Scripture God frequently refers to himself as 'I'—depending on how you understand the Hebrew of Exodus 3:14, it may even be that his name is 'I Am' or 'I Am who Am'—and it would, I believe, be heretical to maintain that the God who speaks in the Hebrew Bible is simply God the Father, one of the persons of the Trinity. No, the theologians tell us, and I think that nothing else makes sense in the light of the doctrine of the Trinity, the God who spoke to Moses and Elijah and Ezekiel was the Triune God. And if this is so, God, the Triune God, must be a person. I would say, rather, that the defect in this argument comes from the way it uses the terms 'the Father,' 'the Son,' and 'God.' It uses these phrases as what logicians call 'singular terms' by which they mean terms that bear a relation called 'denoting' or 'reference' or 'designation' or 'naming' to a single object. But the very notion of a singular term is infected with the idea of the single all-encompassing relation of identity that we have rejected. If, for example, 'Catherine the Great' is a

singular term, it follows that if 'Catherine the Great' denotes x and also denotes y , then x is identical with y . A logic that, like the logic of relative identity, rejects the very notion of a single, all-encompassing identity relation, must, therefore reject the notion of a singular term. But singular terms pervade, or seem to pervade, all our discourse, religious and non-religious. If we "reject" singular terms we must find something to put in their place, something to do at least some of their work. I will show by example how to do this. Let us first consider the word 'God.' One thing we must be able to say that we ordinarily say using this singular term (at least it appears to be a singular term) is this: God spoke by the prophets. Suppose we introduce the predicate 'is divine' to express the divine nature or Godhead. Instead of saying 'God spoke by the prophets' we may say this:

Something is divine and anything divine is the same being as it, and it spoke by the prophets.

(Here I use 'something,' 'anything,' and 'it' as logicians do: when one is speaking very generally, one many use these words to speak of, well, *anything*, including human beings, angels, and God himself.) Now what of singular terms that purport to denote the individual persons of the Trinity, terms like 'the Father,' 'the Son,' 'the second person of the Trinity,' and 'he who proceeds from the Father'? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are individuated; each is made *who he is* by, the relations that hold among them. The Father, for example, begets the Son, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son (or perhaps proceeds from the Father alone), and the Father proceeds from no one and is unbegotten. Suppose we so understand the predicates 'begets' and 'is begotten' that no one but the Father begets and no one but the Son is begotten. We could then understand theological sentences that contain 'the Father' and 'the Son' after the following models:

The Father made all things

Something begets and whatever begets is the same person as it and it made all things

All things were made through the Son

Something is begotten and whatever is begotten is the same person as it and all things were made through it.

Now, what of our embarrassing argument? Is the Father the same person as God? Is the Son the same person as God? If these things are conceded, does it follow that the Son is the same person as the Father. The statement 'The Father is the same person as God' would be written like this:

Something x begets and whatever begets is the same person as x and something y is divine and whatever is divine is the same being as y and x is the same person as y .

And similarly for 'The Son is the same person as God':

Something x is begotten and whatever is begotten is the same person as x and something y is divine and whatever is divine is the same being as y and x is the same person as y .

But 'The Son is the same person as the Father' would be written thus:

Something x begets and whatever begets is the same person as x and something y is begotten and whatever is begotten is the same person as y and x is the same person as y .

And this last statement does not follow from the first two, despite the fact that the rule Transitivity applies to the relation "is the same person as." I will in fact show you how to prove that the last statement does not follow from the first two—using devices from what logicians call the theory of models. Consider the following little story:

There are exactly two dogs in Ivan's shop. They are of the same breed and are for sale at different prices. One barks at the other, and the other never barks at all.

This little story is sufficient for the truth of the following two statements (if we consider "Ivan's shop" to comprise the whole universe):

Something x barks and whatever barks is the same price as x and something y is a dog and whatever is a dog is the same breed as y and x is the same price as y .

Something x is barked at and whatever is barked at is the same price as x and something y is a dog and whatever is a dog is the same breed as y and x is the same price as y .

Now consider the following statement:

Something x barks and whatever barks is the same price as x and something y is barked at and whatever is barked at is the same price as y and x is the same price as y .

This statement is *not* true in our story, for one thing in the story barks, another is barked at, and they are for sale at different prices. Now consider this question: does the third statement follow from the first two by the standard logic of the textbooks? Unless our story about Ivan's shop is self-contradictory, the answer to this question must be No, for the standard logic of the textbooks is known to have this property: if a story is not self-contradictory, then no statement that is false in the story can be deduced by the rules of the standard logic of the textbooks from any set of statements that are true in the story. But our little story of Ivan's shop and its canine inhabitants is obviously not self-contradictory, and, therefore, the third statement does not follow from the first two.

Now let us return to our three theological statements, our statements that represent 'The Father is the same person as God' and 'The Son is the same person as God' and 'The Father is the same person as the Son.' Does the third, which is certainly inconsistent with the doctrine of the Trinity, follow from the first two (which I, at least do not find objectionable)—I mean does it

follow given the logic of relative identity that I have presented? The answer to this question is, No it does not follow, and this may be shown as follows. If it did follow, then it would be possible explicitly to write down the steps of the reasoning, each valid according to the logic of relative identity, by which the third statement was deduced from the first two. That reasoning could, by a purely mechanical set of transpositions of terms, be turned into a piece of reasoning, valid according to the standard logic of the textbooks, by which 'Something x is barked at and whatever is barked at is the same price as x and something y is a dog and whatever is a dog is the same breed as y and x is the same price as y ' follows from the story of Ivan's shop. And we have seen that this statement does not follow from that story by the standard logic of the textbooks. If all this is too complicated to take in at one sitting, here is a statement of what I claim to have shown that is not too wide of the mark.

Suppose this set of statements was self-contradictory: 'The Father is the same person as God. The Son is the same person as God. The Father is not the same person as the Son.' It would follow that the simple story of Ivan's shop—There are exactly two dogs in Ivan's shop; they are of the same breed and are for sale at different prices; one barks at the other, and the other never barks at all—was self-contradictory; but this simple little story is obviously not self-contradictory.

In a talk of this length I cannot say enough to establish my general thesis, or even to discuss our first anti-Trinitarian argument. My general thesis is this: All the constituent propositions of the doctrine of the Trinity can be expressed in the language of relative identity, and they can be shown to be mutually consistent, given that the correct logic of identity is the logic of relative identity. That is to say, they can be shown to be mutually consistent *if* a certain simple story about everyday life—a story hardly more complicated than the story of Ivan's shop—is not self-contradictory. And it will be evident to anyone that this simple little story about everyday life is not self-contradictory.

THE ELEMENTS OF TRIADOLOGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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The elements of initial triadology in the Book of Revelation are carefully studied. It is affirmed that the last book of the New Testament contains a rather developed triadology. The theology of Revelation is presented in the specific form of images and symbols. Symbolic numbers and the structure of the text are of central importance. Special attention is paid to the unique threefold formula of the prescript in Rev. 1, 4f. The divine self-declarations which appear as modifications of the Name of God are carefully examined: *He who is and who was and who is to come, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Lord God the Almighty*. It is pointed out that there are numerous indications of the divinity of Jesus Christ and of his equality with God. The absence of direct indications of the personal character of the Spirit is noted. Nevertheless there are numerous indirect allusions to the Spirit reckoned as the third person of the divine Trinity.

INTRODUCTION

My topic is the triadic elements of the New Testament. What sort of elements exactly will I be talking about? Some of them are well-known (*kreshalnaya*), such as for example the baptismal formula in Matt. 28:19, the greeting at the beginning of the first letter of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 1:2) and the blessing at the end of the second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 13:13). Our attention will not be given to individual elements of the triad, such as we find in the high Christology of the Gospel according to John, the letters of the Apostle Peter and the Book of Acts. The triadic elements that will bear mentioned here are taken from a far less familiar source—the book of Revelation. The language of this book is not that of familiar discourse, often punctuated with discursive declarations so characteristic, for example, of Paul and so ready at

hand to the modern person. In Revelation we come upon a completely different method of doing theology, which is built upon establishing an intuition and a sophisticated literary structure using an entire repertoire of symbols and allusions, many of which take us beyond the world of ordinary experience.

The theology of the book of Revelation is highly theocentric. Its teaching about God is an immense addition to the theology of the New Testament.

TRIADIC ANALOGUES OF GOD

At the beginning of the book, John the mystery-seer speaks of God's threeness (1:0–5a): "Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." These words are the formal part of the prescriptive address and greeting, which in the book of Revelation is commonly understood as referring to the seven churches of Asia Minor. The standard form of Judean greeting, *grace and peace*, we can find in the writings of the apostle Paul: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:3 and so on). This christianized form of the Judean greeting, which is common in letters, has an important theological force to it. Here Jesus Christ is put on the same level with God the Father. The Christians of the First Century very naturally included Jesus in the sphere of the Godlike. He is the source of salvation that comes to the people from God. Of course, the first Christians didn't have ontological terms for expressing the relationship of Jesus to God.

But in the book of Revelation we see a unique threeness in the greeting. Trinitarian formulas are found in New Testament books such as 1 Peter 1:2; and 2 Cor 13:13. But the formula used by John the mystery-seer is unique. Perhaps it shows John's original adaptation of Paul's dual formula. The changes John introduces involve the expressions, *God the Father* and *Lord Jesus Christ* in describing these two faces of the Holy Trinity in a manner characteristic of the book of Revelation. John thought about the Christian concept of God artistically. The language that is characteristic of his theology isn't contrived. Instead, he creatively used the resources of the Judean and Judeo-Christian traditions. His book is a result of an inspired and at the same time highly reflective knowledge of God.

The original form of the greeting in 1:4b–5a shows that the understanding of God is consciously and principally Trinitarian. But of course we should not credit John with the concept of a patristic teaching about the Trinity, which became a norm for later Christian teachings.

The theological sources of the triadology of John are basically the same as those that lead to the patristic development of the Trinitarian teaching: and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are included in the Judean monotheistic faith in God. But we should note here, that John expresses this concept in very special terms. Perhaps it is closer to John's practice to observe that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not directly linked to God, but to the *god-like*, since John, along with most authors of the New Testament, attributes the word *God* to God the Father who *was and is and will be*. Of course, the word *godliness*, as a term referring to the nature of God is foreign to John. But without this terminology we cannot speak of the divine dimension, which includes both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIRST FACE (as in icon, standing for a person of the Trinity).

The prologue of Revelation ends with the announcement *I am Alpha and Omega, says the Lord, Who is and was and will be*. (1:8) In this self-proclamation we are given three of four of the most important names for God in Revelation: *Alpha and Omega*; *Lord God the All-sustaining One*; *who is, was and will be*. The verse (1:8) is found in the beginning of John's proclamation that speaks about his visions (1:9–22:6). This is also one of the two cases where God speaks of Himself. The second case (21:5–8) contains a similar self-proclamation: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end* (21:6). It is interesting to note that complementing these two examples are two self-proclamations of Jesus Christ:

God: *I am Alpha and Omega* (1:8).

Christ: *I am the first and the last* (1: 17).

God: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end* (21:6).

Christ: *I am Alpha and Omega, First and Last, the beginning and the end* (22:13).

This singular comparison of these four self-proclamations shows the equality of God and Jesus Christ. If we consider the factual identity of such expressions as *Alpha and Omega*, *First and Last*, *Beginning and End*, we see that Revelation contains four cases of self-proclamation of God and Christ. This is not a coincidence—numbers have a tremendous theological significance in the book. Two of the three other important names for God are also found seven times. Seven is the number for *completeness*. Here this number expresses *the completeness of theological existence*, derived through the names given.

The expression *First and Last* is taken from the prophet Isaiah (44:6; 48:12). There the name has the meaning, *the God of Israel who is the sole creator of all things and the Lord of history*. In the book of Revelation this is

emphasized by means of the following literary structure: God announces himself in the beginning of the visions and in the end, as *the eschatological conclusion of history* (in terms of His final denouement) (21:6). The expression *the beginning and end* comes from the Greek philosophical tradition, where it signifies the eternity of the highest God. John gives preference to the name *Alpha and Omega*, as identical in meaning to the other two.

Eternity and unchangeableness as attributes of God bear a close resemblance to the name *Who is and was and will be*. In this case we also find a numerical symbolism. The formula expressing the three different time dimensions is found three times (1:4, 1:8 and 4:8). The form with the two time periods (past and present) is found twice (11:17; 16:5). The verb *will come* instead of *be* follows an Old Testament manner of speaking. So the author is speaking not only of the future existence of God, but of His coming in the future for judgment and salvation.

It is interesting that the *unchangeableness* of God is expressed in an unusual grammatical form. Translations clear away obvious grammatical irregularities of the Greek text: if (1:4) is translated into Russian literally we get (in English, of course) *Joy to you and to the world from here (now) and coming* (in the future, or something like this). In this pericope John uses the nominative case. Even the name God cannot be changed, He has a status that is independent of grammar.

The third of the most important names for God is *The Lord God all-sustaining*. In this form this name is seen seven times (1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15: 3, 16.7, 19.6, 21.22). This term is also tied to the divine Name in its wider sense of Yahweh. Here the power of Yahweh over all things and history is demonstrated. The Greek translation *Pantocrator (the All-sustaining One)* conveys not so much the notion of abstract sovereignty in the sense of actual control, as much as the idea, *the one who upholds all things*.

Finally, there is a fourth and very important name for God in Revelation: *Sitting upon the Throne*. This expression is repeated seven times (4.9, 5.1, 7, 13, 6.16, 7.15, 21.5).

The central meaning of the word *throne* is *the underlining vision of the crown hall* mentioned in chapter 4. This is no surprise, because it is in this chapter that God's absolute sovereignty is brought into view for the reader. This highest realm is pictured as being realized on earth, in the sense that divine sovereignty reigns over all, even when the powers of evil may appear to be challenging God. The unapproachable transcendence of God is emphasized in the phrase, *Sitting on the throne*. Attention is not directed at the throne itself, but upon what is going on about the throne, on the heavenly liturgy of creatures bowing to God the Creator. Clearly, God is central to it all.

Here, we will not pause to consider other qualities of God, symbolically expressed in Revelation. Our focus turns to Jesus Christ.

JESUS CHRIST

The identification of Jesus Christ with God, which is clearly expressed in the writing of John the evangelist, is emphasized in Revelation in both its literary structure, and the numerical symbolism, and by other means we can only hint at here. We already saw that Jesus Christ addresses himself by the same names as are used of God the creator, such as, *Alpha and Omega*, *First and Last*, and *beginning and end*. These names signify the eternity of God and his relationship to the world: not only is he the Creator of all, but he is bringing all to an eschatological end. Since these names are used as references to Jesus, one can only conclude that they must mean that he's also a part of the eternal existence of God as the beginning and goal of all that is created. In 1:18, Jesus also calls himself *alive*, meaning that *He partakes in the infinite life of God*. Moreover, the expression, *And was dead, and now is, and will live forever and ever*, conveys his time-transcending dimensionality. He is eternal. His god-like *life* was interrupted by his human death, but he shares God's eternal life because of his victory over death. So, the god-like self-identification of Jesus in 1.18 shows His power over hell and death. By this power He conquered his death through resurrection: "I have the keys of hell and death."

Jesus' participation in the creation, so obvious in the prologue of the Gospel of John, is also mentioned in the book of Revelation in the address to the Laodician Church (3.14). There He is spoken of as "the beginning of God's creation." This does not mean that Jesus was the first creation. It also doesn't mean that through resurrection he was the beginning of a new creation. This phrase has the same meaning as the first part of the name *beginning and end*, which is used for God (21.6) and Jesus (22.13). Jesus precedes all creation as their source. And the Revelation pronouncement is in accordance with Paul (1 Cor 8.6; Col. 1. 15–17), and with the Letter to Jews/Hebrews (1.2). Jesus role not only in creation but also in the eschatological culmination has already been mentioned.

We have reviewed the seven references to the divine names in Revelation, and seen that John uses this device to emphasize them. It is relevant here to review the statistics of some Christological names.

The identification of God with Jesus in no way detracts from the importance of His humanity. This is seen through the example of his name *Jesus*. This name is seen in the book of Revelation 14 times. Seven of these are phrases such as *evidence of Jesus* and *witnesses of Jesus*. This underlines the importance of the witnessing theme (which is perhaps the key theme in Revelation).

The name *Jesus* occurs seven times (including Jesus Christ). The word *Agnus* as a term for Jesus (as *Lamb of God*) occurs 28 times. Seven of these times it occurs in phrases mentioning *Agnus* and *God* together (5.13, 6.16, 7.10, 14.4, 21.22, 22.1–3). The number 4 is the second in importance in Revelation after 7. 7 is a number connoting *wholeness*, while 4 is the number for the *cosmos* (as we see in the expression, *the four corners of the earth*: 7.1, 20.8, and four *spheres of the cosmos*: 5.13, 14.7). There is also a reference to *four* and *seven* in the first of the four executions of every seven-fold execution affecting the world (6.8, 8.7–12, 16.2–9). The seven/four formula also occurs with the mention of *Agnus* (Lamb) signifying a worldwide victory regarding the influence of his Atonement. This has a bearing on the fact that the earth's population is always spoken of in terms of a four-fold expansion of terms (tribe, language, nationality and race). The four-foldness phrase and its very slight variations appear seven times (5.9, 7.9, 10.11, 11.9, 13.7, 14.6, 17.15). In 5.9 we see the connection of this phrase with the victory of *Agnus* (*the Lamb*).

What is of special note is the clear equality of Jesus and God. Here *Agnus* (Lamb) is Jesus who conquered his death by his resurrection, and He stands at the throne with God sitting upon it (5.6, 7.17). Here *Agnus* becomes the center of liturgical worship. The circle of the worship widens, with a circumferencing that includes not only heaven, but also the entire cosmos (5.13).

The inclusion of Jesus in monotheistic worship is also seen in the grammatical examples of the text. Therefore in 11.15 where we find the mention of God and Jesus, the verb is singular. And in 6.17 and 22.3–4 the two Faces (Persons) are also in the singular, and the possessive *His* is also used.

In the above, I'm assuming that all the noted examples of the book of Revelation where Jesus is in view, clearly point to the divinity of the Second Face of the Holy Trinity. Many more examples could have been listed for comment, but our point has been made, Jesus is God.

It is time to move on to a short overview of evidence for the third face of the Holy Trinity—the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

In comparison to Jesus Christ and God, references to the Holy Spirit in the book are few. But it would be a mistake to conclude that in the theology of Revelation the Holy Spirit is unimportant, or less than divine. Contrariwise, the Spirit plays an important role in the divine work of establishing the Kingdom of God in the world.

Much more important than the rare mention of the Holy Spirit is the fact that the numerical significances are comparable to that of the other two faces of the Trinity: God and Christ. References to the Holy Spirit can be divided into two categories: those that refer to the *seven Spirits* and those that refer to the simple expression *spirit*. *Seven spirits* is a common expression for the symbolic *world of revelation*. They are mentioned 4 times (1.4, 3.1, 4.5, 5.6). The number 4 symbolically refers to the *world*, or cosmos, and the number 7 symbolizes *wholeness* and *completeness*. *Seven spirits* represents the *fullness of God's strength*. They are spoken of as being *sent to all the earth* (5.6). The four references to the *seven-fold Holy Spirit* is analogous to the numberings of the seven times/four-fold symbol of the people of earth (5.9, 7.9, 10.11, 11.9, 13.7, 14.6, 17.5), that is, every tongue, people, tribe and nation. The seven/four notion bears a resemblance to the 28 references of the (7/4)-formula in connection with *Agnus*, which signifies the world-wide spread of the victory of the Lamb of God (5.6). The four occurrences of the seven spirits show that *Agnus's* victory spreads to the whole world with the fullness of the power of God.

In addition to these four instances of the seven spirits, the book also contains fourteen references to the *Spirit*. Seven of them are found in prophecies delivered to the seven Churches of Asia Minor (2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22). Seven other cases, four with the phrase *in the spirit* (1.10, 4.2, 17.3, 21.10), two instances quoting the words of the *Holy Spirit* (14.13, 22.17) and one instance that includes the phrase *Prophecy spirit* (19. 10). Regarding the last, it is important to note that the word *prophecy* itself is seen in the book exactly seven times (1.3, 11.6, 19.10, 22.7, 10, 18, 19).

In contrast to the Gospel of John, where the identity of Spirit as the Counselor appears without any suspicion or question, the book of Revelation fails to contain any direct references to the Spirit's identity. At the same time, it bears mention that references to the Holy Spirit (in symbolic form) in greetings (1.4b–5a) along with the other two divine identities points to the fact that the Spirit was also seen as a distinct identity/face by John. Moreover, for him, the Spirit speaks, prophesies, and is present in visions, and witnesses.

The identity of the Spirit also comes into the picture in terms of the unique theme of the book. There is a parody of the Holy Trinity in the picture presented of a Satanic trinity. The dragon (a source of opposition to the Lord), or Animal from the Sea (or inhabitant of the chasm), is presented as a parody on *Agnus*. Both are worshipped by those "whose names are not written in the book of life" (13.8). Finally, *the other animal* from the earth (13.11), also called *the pseudo-prophet* (20.10), speaks like the dragon (13.11) and is an element in the worship of antichrist, the first animal (13.12). Because John does not think of either the dragon or the two monsters as abstract powers, but as real identities, we must therefore assume that they parody not three abstract concepts but three genuine identities, one of whom is the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

From this short interpretive analysis we see that an understanding of God in Revelation is a result of some very serious theological reflection. Unfortunately, for a very long time this teaching was misunderstood because it appeared in this potentially confusing book. Revelation contains the most developed trinitarian theology in the New Testament (except for the Gospel of John). The book reflects the development of Trinitarian doctrine towards the end of the First Century AD. This doctrine in these sources contains a strict apophatical understanding of the transcendence of God. At the same time, the theology of Revelation confirms the presence of God in the world, where the powers of evil work. This presence realizes itself through *Agnus* (the Lamb) and the Seven Spirits—the Holy Spirit. At the same time, *Agnus* is also pictured as at the heavenly throne, and the spirits (the wholesomeness of the Holy Spirit) are in front of the throne of God. In the symbolic world of Revelation this means that the eschatological coming of the kingdom of God realizes itself through sacrificial love and the witness to truth. Thereby God as Ontological Trinity is revealed not through speculations about God. But rather, Trinity as such, is present through the possible relationship of God to the world in the various venues Revelation pictures.

THE TRINITARIAN TEACHING OF ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN

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This paper outlines the Trinitarian theology of Gregory Nazianzen as a representative of the Byzantine tradition. First, it analyses Gregory's idea of the unfolding of Trinitarian dogma in the course of history. Second, it examines the Trinitarian terminology he uses in his polemics against the Arians. Third, it discusses the divinity of the Trinity. And finally, the paper looks at the vision of dogmatics and the moral implications of the unity of the Holy Trinity. The article comes to conclude that for Gregory, the Holy Trinity was not just a subject of theological controversy, it was primarily an object of prayerful meditation and loving devotion.

In this paper I would like to outline the trinitarian theology of one of the greatest theologians of Byzantine tradition, Gregory Nazianzen. I shall begin by analyzing his idea of the unfolding of trinitarian dogma in the course of history. Then I shall turn to the discussion of trinitarian terminology employed by Gregory in his polemics against the Arians. Then I will discuss Gregory's teaching on the divinity of the Holy Trinity. Finally, I shall look at his vision of dogmatic and moral implications of the unity of the Holy Trinity.

THE UNFOLDING OF DOGMA IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY

Throughout the fourth century, when Gregory Nazianzen lived, there were numerous debates about the nature of the Holy Trinity. The main stages are as follows:

1. the appearance and spread of Arianism at the beginning of the century;

2. the Council of Nicea (325 A.D) and the victory of the *homoousian* party;
3. Arian reaction during the last years of Constantine's reign and the further dissemination of Arianism under his successors;
4. the *homoiousian* and *homoian* parties in the mid-century;
5. the domination of Neo-Arianism (Eunomianism) in the Christian East in the third quarter of the century;
6. the appearance of the 'Neo-Nicene' movement among the *homoousians*; the theological activity of the Great Cappadocians; the arguments about the divinity of the Holy Spirit;
7. the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) and the final victory of the Orthodox.

The trinitarian debates of the fourth century were preceded by a lengthy prehistory. The notion of the Trinity derives from the New Testament, which contains the formula 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'¹ This became the baptismal formula of the early Church. The term 'Trinity,' however, is found nowhere in the New Testament. Neither does it contain clear teaching on the equality of the Father and the Son: while Christ "made himself equal with God"² and said "I and the Father are one"³ he also said: "My Father is greater than I."⁴ Nowhere in the New Testament is the divinity of the Holy Spirit clearly proclaimed. The term 'Trinity' appears for the first time in the writings of Theophilus of Alexandria,⁵ and it is only in the third century that its use can be noted more widely (particularly, by Origen).

On the threshold of the third century 'monarchian' heresies appear, described thus by modern scholars because of a divergent insistence by some on the 'monarchy' of the Father as the fundamental principle of divine existence. Monarchians can be divided into two groups: 'dynamic' and 'modalistic.'⁶ According to the former, Christ was a simple man in whom divine power dwelt; according to the latter, Christ was God the Father who took upon himself human flesh. The first understanding was re-shaped into the various modifications of Arianism, while the particular expression of the second was later called Sabellianism. Sabellius, who lived in the third century, declared that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are but three names of the same Monad, which he called *son-father*.⁷ The Monad was silent by itself, but, when the time came to create the world, it spoke and thus generated the 'Word,' i.e. the Son. Therefore, in the course of history God the Father extends into the Son and the Spirit.⁸ The same Monad which in Old Testament times had acted in the person of the Father as the Creator and Lawgiver, in New Testament times acted in the person of the Son as the Saviour; after the Ascension of the Lord it acts in the person of the Holy Spirit which vivifies and distributes gifts.⁹ Speaking in his second *Discourse* about the gradual disclosing of the mystery of the Trinity, Gregory points to

Arianism, Sabellianism, and ‘ultra-orthodoxy’ (whatever this may be).¹⁰ Gregory identifies Sabellianism with ‘atheism,’ Arianism with ‘Judaism,’ and the error of the ‘ultra-orthodox’ with ‘polytheism.’ He insists that both the unity of God’s nature and the distinction between the three Hypostases should be preserved.

Of the three heretical turns in theology, atheism, Judaism, and polytheism, the first exemplified by Sabellius the Libyan, the second by Arius of Alexandria, and the third by some of the ultra-orthodox among us, where should I turn? Can I avoid the errors of these three heresies and remain within the limits of piety? I don’t want to be led astray by the new analysis and synthesis of atheistic Sabellianism. And I do not want the plurality of severed natures, associated with Arius.¹¹ It is not necessary to be so devoted to the Father, so as to rob Him of His Fatherhood, or so devoted to Christ, as to neglect to preserve both His Sonship and the rank of the Father as origin. For the unity of the Godhead must be preserved, and the Trinity of Persons confessed, each with the appropriate property.¹² Affirming as he did the unity of the Trinity and the distinction between the three Hypostases, Gregory was convinced that his teaching is not a dogmatic innovation but a continuation and development of what the Fathers taught. The unity of the Trinity had been expressed by Athanasius.¹³ The formula ‘one God in three Hypostases’ was introduced by Origen.¹⁴ In the fourth century this doctrine was spread among the *homoousians* and then became the banner of the ‘neo-Nicene’ movement. For Gregory, the dogma of the Holy Trinity was something he inherited not only from ancient theologians, but also from his own parents: ‘If only we were able to confess until our last breath, with much boldness, the good pledge of the Holy Fathers—those who were closer to Christ and the initial faith—the confession by which we were nourished from our childhood!...’¹⁵ The faithful are not to introduce dogmatic innovations, but to preserve ‘the faith of the Gospel’ and the ‘pledge’ inherited from the Church Fathers—this is what constitutes the mission of a Christian theologian.

Gregory continues:

Let nobody ever perish, but let us in one spirit and in one soul *strive for the faith of the Gospel...*¹⁶ guarding the good pledge¹⁷ which we received from the Fathers,¹⁸ worshipping the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, knowing the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Spirit. We have been baptized in Their name; we have believed in Them; we have united ourselves with Them. We divide Them before uniting, and we unite before dividing. We do not count three as a single entity,¹⁹ for these are non-hypostatic names and they do not belong to one Hypostasis—otherwise our wealth would be in names and not in realities—but we confess that three are one. They are one not by Hypostasis but by the divinity. The Monad is worshipped in the Triad, and the Triad is recapitulated in the Monad....²⁰

Meditating on the unfolding of the mystery of the Trinity in the course of history, Gregory advances the idea of the gradual development of church dogmatic teaching. This development takes place by means of what he calls

'additions,' i.e. by the gradual sharpening and enrichment of theological language. God had revealed Himself to humans in the Old Testament, but this revelation focused on an understanding of the unity of God over and against pagan polytheism; hence, God the Father was the subject of revelation. In the New Testament the Son is revealed to humanity, while the 'present' period belongs to the activity of the Holy Spirit, whereby dogmatic truths receive definite expression. Gregory, therefore, does not believe that the New Testament exhausts all theological queries and that every question can be answered by Scripture. On the contrary, the New Testament is but a stage on the way of ascent to Christian theology. This ascent 'from glory to glory' takes place at all times and will continue until the end of time.

There have been two remarkable transformations of human life in the course of world history. These are called two 'covenants,' and, so significant as to be termed, two 'shakings of the earth.'²¹ The first was the transition from idols to the Law;²² the second, from the Law to the Gospel.²³ The Gospel also tells of a third 'shaking,' the change from this present state of things to what lies unmoved, unshaken,²⁴ and beyond. An identical feature occurs in both covenants. The feature? There was nothing sudden or coerced in the first shaking and consequent transformation. We need to know why. This was the mode so that humans would be persuaded, not forced. The unspontaneous is the impermanent—as when force is used to keep stems or plants in check. The spontaneous both lasts longer and is more secure. It belongs to despotic power to use force; it is a mark of God's reasonableness that human free agency should not be violated. God thought it wrong to do men good against their will but right to benefit those with a mind to it. For this reason, he acts like a schoolmaster or doctor, taking away some ancestral customs, while allowing others. He yields on some trifles in order to promote happiness, just as doctors do with the sick to get them to take medicine along with sweeter ingredients artfully blended in. A departure from time-honored, customary ways is, after all, not easy. Am I making my point? The first change cut away idols but allowed sacrifices to remain; the second stripped away sacrifices but did not forbid circumcision. Then, when men had been reconciled to a withdrawal, they agreed to release what had been left them as a concession. Under the first covenant the concession was sacrifice, and God's followers were Jews in contrast to Gentiles; under the second, the focus was on circumcision—and God's followers were called Christians instead of Jews, brought round gradually, bit by bit, to the Gospel. Paul's argument should convince you here. He progressed from circumcision²⁵ and kept ceremonial cleansings²⁶ to the point where he declared, 'But if I, brethren, preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?'²⁷ His earlier conduct was an accommodation to circumstance, his later conduct belonged to the full truth.²⁸ This text, which is of crucial importance to an understanding of the entire history of Eastern Christian theology, contains several important notions:

1. That divine revelation, which began in the Old Testament, does not end with the New Testament but continues even in our times.

2. This revelation takes place not by means of compulsion but by means of persuasion, for which a special strategy was developed by God the Pedagogue.

3. This strategy is a gradual and step-by-step process of an ever and more profound revelation of dogmatic truths.

4. The Bible is not the last word in Christian dogmatic teaching but only a step in its development.

5. Christ himself has not spoken in the Gospel of everything which it is necessary to know about God; He continues to reveal the truth through the Holy Spirit. In other words, New Testament revelation continues in the Church.

This was Gregory's dynamic understanding of the development of Christian dogma and of the gradual revelation of the mystery of the Trinity in the course of history. We must note that he speaks not about introducing new dogmas, but about an increasingly fuller revelation of the dogmas which, in Scripture, take the form of *hint*, or *suggestion*.

Gregory here expresses a widely held notion in Eastern Christian theology—that holy Tradition is the main source of faith. Eastern theology was a stranger to the juxtaposition of Scripture and Tradition which was to become a cornerstone of Western scholasticism. In Eastern Christian understanding, Scripture is a part of Tradition: it grew out of Tradition and represents a certain stage in the latter's development. As early as Irenaeus we find the idea of the primacy of Tradition: he speaks of the New Testament scriptures as a written transmission of what the apostles preached orally.²⁹ Opposing the Gnostics who claimed possession of a certain hidden knowledge, Irenaeus does not advance the notion of *Sola Scriptura*, but the principle of faithfulness to 'the Tradition which derives from the apostles and is preserved in the churches through the successions of the presbyters.'³⁰ Gregory speaks in much the same way, but he stresses not so much the preservation of Tradition as its development and enrichment. Hidden knowledge not found in the New Testament canon is not a Gnostic invention: it does exist, but not in their 'falsely-called knowledge'; it exists in Church Tradition. Christ entrusted this knowledge to the Church, and it is in its experience and theology that His teaching continues to develop.

Gregory claims that the dogmatic truths of Christianity are implicitly present in Scripture; one must only be able to discover them. He advances a method of reading Scripture which may be called 'retrospective.' It involves reading Scripture in the light of subsequent tradition and identifying the dogmas formulated more explicitly in later epochs. Such an approach to Scripture was quite common in the patristic period. According to Gregory, not

only the New Testament, but also the Old reveals the mystery of the Holy Trinity: Glorify Him with the Cherubim, who unite the Three Holies into One Lord,³¹ and point to the Primal Substance as their wings open to the diligent. Be enlightened as was David, who said to the Light, *In Thy Light do we see Light*,³² that is, in the Spirit we shall see the Son.³³ Or listen to John of thunder,³⁴ who sounds forth nothing that is low or earthly concerning God, but what is high and heavenly, Who is in the beginning, and is with God, and is God the Word,³⁵ and true God of the true Father, and who is not merely a good fellow—servant honoured only with the title of Son; add the Other Comforter—other, that is, from the Speaker, Who is the Word of God. And when you read, *I and the Father are One*,³⁶ keep before your eyes the Unity of Substance; but when you see, *We will come to him, and make Our abode with him*,³⁷ remember the distinction of Persons; and when you see the Names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,³⁸ think of the Three personal characteristics. With Luke, be inspired as you study the Acts of the Apostles. Why do you allign yourself with Ananias and Sapphira, those vain embezzlers—if indeed the theft of one's own property be a vain thing—by appropriating neither silver nor any other cheap and worthless thing, such as a wedge of gold, or a didrachma, as a rapacious soldier did of old; but rather by stealing the Godhead Itself, and lying, *not to men but to God*,³⁹ as you have heard.⁴⁰

Thus, the Bible must be read in the light of trinitarian dogma and within the context of the entire dogmatic tradition of the Church. In the fourth century, both the Orthodox and the Arians appealed to scriptural texts in order to confirm their teachings. Depending on the teachings, the same texts were interpreted in a different way. To establish a normative interpretation was, therefore, of crucial importance. For Gregory, there is only one criterion for a right approach to Scripture: faithfulness to Church Tradition. The only legitimate interpretation of biblical texts is that which is based on Tradition; any other interpretation is false since it 'steals the Godhead.' Outside the context of Tradition, biblical texts lose their dogmatic value. Within Tradition, however, even those texts which do not contain direct dogmatic statements can be interpreted as having dogmatic significance. Christians see in scriptural texts what is hidden from non-Christians; the Orthodox can find there what remains concealed from the heretics. For the latter, the mystery of the Trinity remains under a veil⁴¹ which can be lifted only by Christ and only within the Church. This understanding of the interconnectedness between Scripture and Tradition is characteristic of Eastern patristics in general, and of Gregory Nazianzen in particular.

The Great Cappadocians developed a trinitarian theology which, while rooted in the teachings of Nicaea and Athanasius, went much further in articulating an even more precise terminology for the Holy Trinity. In particular, they introduced a clear distinction between the terms *upostasis*

(*hypostasis*) and *ousia* (*substance*). While Athanasius employed both terms as synonyms, the Cappadocians ascribed to the former the meaning of a concrete and personal being, and to the latter a meaning of something abstract and general. Thus, the substance known as 'humanity' can be expressed in various hypostases, such as Peter, James, John.⁴² In the same way, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three 'hypostases' of the same God. This terminology helped the Cappadocians effectively repulse the attacks of the Arians, who accused them of either Sabellianism or 'tritheism'.⁴³

Gregory's trinitarian doctrine, like those of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, was developed within the framework of the anti-Arian polemic. It found its most complete expression in his 29th *Discourse*, or the Third of the *Theological Discourses*, which contains successive refutations of the Arian trinitarian postulates. Gregory's starting point is the idea of 'monarchy' as the fundamental characteristic of the Divinity. This is opposed to the 'anarchy'—i.e. the rejection of divine providence—and 'polyarchy,' or polytheism.

There are three prominent views of deity: anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. Anarchy leads to disorder because it lacks a governing principle. Polyarchy incorporates a plurality of principles, and so generates factions because there is no single governing principle, and so we have disorder again. Both lead to an identical result—lack of order, which, in turn, leads to disintegration, since disorder is the prelude to disintegration. Monarchy, with its single governing principle, is to be valued—not monarchy defined as the sovereignty of a single person, but rather a single rule produced by an equality of nature, a harmony of will, an identity of action⁴⁴ and the convergence towards their source all of which springs from the One—none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in being. For this reason, a monad eternally changes to a dyad and stops at a triad—as in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

As we have seen, the idea of God's monarchy was fundamental to both Sabellius and Arius; the notion of the Son's co-eternity with the Father was rejected by Arius precisely because he perceived in it a breach of the principle of the Father's monarchy. For Arius, those who insist on the eternal begetting of the Son introduce 'two unbegotten origins.'⁴⁶ Gregory opposed this understanding of *monarchy* and claimed that the term is not related to the *Hypostasis* of God the Father, but to the Godhead as such, i.e. to the three Hypostases together. In other words, Gregory did not associate the idea of monarchy with the Father but with the unity of the Godhead.

The change of a monad into a dyad is a concept meant to emphasize the original unity of the Godhead, an idea found in Dionysius of Rome (3rd century): 'We enlarge the divine unity into one indivisible triad, and vice versa, we reduce the triad, without diminishing it, into unity.'⁴⁷ For Gregory, the notion of augmenting a monad in a diadic way is probably the result of an

oblique influence of Plotinus,⁴⁸ for whom the main principle of all things, referred to as 'the One,' generates Intelligence, which, in turn, generates the Soul. The One is an absolute simplicity, beyond any duality or plurality, and beyond human words and understanding. While Intelligence is Plato's 'realm of forms,' the Soul is the realm of sense-perception and discursive knowledge; both are characterized by duality and multiplicity. The relation between the One, Intelligence, and the Soul is expressed in terms of *emanation* and *return*. Intelligence emanates from the One, and the Soul, from Intelligence. *Return* means, *everything which emanates from the One is attracted to its origin*.⁴⁹

When Gregory describes the Trinity, he also speaks of the One, from which is derived and to which returns 'what springs from the One.' However, because the Plotinian triad, unlike the Christian Trinity, is a hierarchical structure, a reference to the former could hardly be of much help in the polemic against Arianism. Though he initially described the Trinity in Neoplatonic categories, Gregory eventually finds it necessary to distance himself from Neoplatonism. Whereas for Plotinus, Intelligence 'emanates' from the One, and Soul 'emanates' from Intelligence, for Gregory we find such Christian terms as 'begetting' and 'procession.'

In a serene, non-temporal, incorporeal way, the Father is parent of what is generated and originator of what proceeds—or whatever name one can apply when one has isolated such entities from things visible. We shall not venture to talk of an 'overflowing of goodness' 'as though a bowl had overflowed'—these were plain terms used in his disquisition on primary and secondary causes.⁵⁰ We ought never to introduce the notion of involuntary generation (in the sense of some sort of unrestrained natural secretion) and other such notions completely out of keeping with ideas about the Godhead. This is why we limit ourselves to Christian terms and so speak of 'the Ingenerate,' 'the Begotten,' or follow a pattern similar to what God the Word himself does in one passage, 'what proceeds from the Father.'⁵¹

Reference to Christ's words is intended to emphasize the idea that terms such as 'generation' and 'procession' are based on the New Testament and are therefore more trustworthy than terms based on the Hellenistic tradition such as *emanation*. Moreover, if the Plotinian model of the triad is applied to the Christian Trinity, it may trigger the supposition that the Son and the Spirit appear against the will of the Father. Subsequent polemic against the Arian understanding of the Trinity turn into arguments about theological language, or about what terminology can be used in which context.⁵² However, in the course of the discussion it becomes clear that the distinction between Orthodoxy and Arianism is not only terminological: there is a fundamental difference in the understanding of the relations between the Father and the Son, and of the Godhead in general.

The dialogue between Gregory and his opponent opens with the latter's questions about the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit:

So when did these last two originate?

They transcend 'whenness,' but if I must give a naive answer—when the Father did.

When was that?

There has not been [a time] when the Father has not been in existence. This, then, is true of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...

Since when has the Son been begotten?

Since as long as the Father has not been begotten.

Since when has the Spirit been proceeding?

Since as long as the Son has not been proceeding but begotten in a non-temporal way that transcends explanation. We cannot, though, explain the meaning of 'supra-temporal' and deliberately keep clear of any suggestion of time. Expressions like *when*, *before something*, *after something*, and *from the beginning* are not free from temporal implications however much we try to avoid them.⁵³

This discussion turns on the Arian formula, 'There was when the Son was not in existence.' Gregory's response bears a distinctly apophatic character. He is emphatic to claim that the mysteries of generation and procession are beyond the category of time: there is no temporal distance between the unoriginate being of the Father, the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. Both the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are co-eternal with the being of the Father.⁵⁴ The question follows: 'How is it, then, that these latter (i.e. the Son and the Spirit) are not like the Father in having no origin, if they are co-eternal with him?' Gregory's answer is again apophatic: they are not without origin in relation to the Father as the single origin, but they are unoriginate in relation to time.⁵⁵ The term 'origin,' Gregory emphasizes, has no temporal connotations when the question is about the Godhead.

Next comes the Arian question: 'How, then, does the process of begetting not involve passion?' Gregory's answer: 'Because a body is not involved.'⁵⁶ 'Passion,' or 'suffering,' is a characteristic of human birth. When the issue concerns the bodiless Godhead, human notions are irrelevant. Both the question and the answer reflect the traditional Christian idea of God's not being subject to 'passion.' The *passionlessness*, or *not-being-subject-to-sufferingness* of the Godhead, an inheritance from the Hellenistic tradition had become commonplace in Christian theology. Nonetheless, Christian theologians did refer to the 'sufferings' of God when speaking of Christ's sufferings on the cross (the so-called 'Theopaschite' tradition).⁵⁷ Following the same tradition, Gregory speaks of the 'sufferings' of God when He became incarnate.⁵⁸ Arguments about the 'sufferings' of God were resumed in

the fifth century, when Christological controversy expanded to the entire Christian Orient. However, beyond the framework of Christology the notion of 'passionlessness' was applied to all three Persons of the Holy Trinity, since the Son's being begotten of the Father was considered 'passionless.'

Further questions raised by the Arians reflect the same tendency—to apply human notions to divine reality:

Can anyone be a 'father,' without beginning to be one?

'He begat' and 'He has begotten' can and must introduce the idea of a beginning of this process of generation?

Has the Father begotten the Son voluntarily or involuntarily?

How has the Son been begotten?

Did He exist or did He not exist when the Father begat Him?

To all of these queries Gregory responds with the following: a) He who did not begin His existence can be a father without beginning to be one; b) the being of the Father is without beginning, and the birth of the Son is without beginning; c) the 'will' of the Father to generate the Son is identical with the generation itself and cannot be separated from it;⁵⁹ d) the birth of the Son from the Father is beyond human intellectual capacities; e) the question about an 'existing' or a 'non-existing' Son has no sense since the Son's birth is 'from the beginning and is co-eternal with His own being and with the being of the Father.'⁶⁰ Gregory's opponent counters, '*But the ingenerate and the generate are not the same thing.*' '*If that is the case, the Father and the Son cannot be the same thing.*' Gregory replies, ingeneracy is not the essence of the Godhead. Therefore, while 'ingenerateness' and 'generateness' are not the same thing, the Father and the Son are identical in their essence, because their essence consists in their being God and not in their being either 'ingenerate' or 'generate.'⁶¹ According to the Arians, 'Father is a designation either of the substance or of the activity,' implying that the Son is either 'an alien essence' over against the Father, or that He is created. The name 'Father,' Gregory responds, designates 'neither the substance nor the activity, but the relationship, the manner of being, which holds good between the Father and the Son.'⁶²

This rather wearisome and scholastic argumentation reflects the kind of polemic that took place between the Arians and Orthodox of the fourth century. Gregory's merit lies in his being able to reduce the main Arian objections to the Christian trinitarian model and to produce a succinct and systematic refutation of the current heresies. Together with Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen formulated what became the basis for trinitarian teaching approved by the Second Ecumenical Council. Arian models of the Trinity were no longer used after this Council, and the Church never had to return to the objections which were so effectively answered by the Cappadocian Fathers.

PNEUMATOLOGICAL ISSUES

The trinitarian argument which begins in the 29th *Discourse* continues with a discussion of Christological issues; these will be dealt with later in this book. Let us now turn to Gregory's pneumatological teaching, expounded in his 31st *Discourse*, in order to understand his specific contribution to this particular aspect of trinitarian theology.

We have already mentioned that the divinity of the Holy Spirit remained an open question during the fourth century. Gregory believed that his personal vocation as a theologian was a) to support the Nicene faith, and b) to expound clearly the matter of the Holy Spirit's divinity: 'I never have and never can honour anything above the Nicene faith... and by God's help ever will be, of that faith, completing in detail that which was incompletely said by them concerning the Holy Spirit; for that question had not then been mooted, namely, that we are to believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are of one Godhead, thus confessing the Spirit also to be God.'⁶³ For the first time Gregory publicly stated this intention in a sermon delivered after his Episcopal ordination, when he assumed the pastoral responsibilities of his father's flock in Nazianzus. In this sermon Gregory confesses his personal devotion to the Holy Spirit and claims that faith in the Spirit's divinity must "come out" of the catacombs and become ecumenically recognized:

...May the victory rest with that which will be for the profit of both you and me,⁶⁴ under the Spirit's guidance of our affairs...to Whom we have given ourselves, and the head anointed with the oil of perfection, in the Almighty Father, and the Only-begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit, Who is God. For how long shall we *hide the lamp under the bushel*,⁶⁵ and withhold from others the full knowledge of the Godhead, when it ought to be now put upon the lampstand and give light to all churches and souls and to the whole fullness of the world, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches, but by distinct declaration? And this indeed is a most perfect setting forth of theology to those Who have been deemed worthy of this grace in Christ Jesus Himself....⁶⁶

However, it was not until the *Theological Orations*, delivered ten years after his ordination to the episcopacy, that Gregory expounded his theology of the Holy Spirit in a systematic way. In his general pneumatological argument he remains close to the treatise *On the Holy Spirit* by Basil the Great, but, as one might expect, goes further to assert the Spirit's divinity.⁶⁷ He wants to familiarize the Church not only with *belief* in the divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also with the *expression* 'the Spirit is God,'⁶⁸ which Basil and many bishops of his time hesitated to employ.

Gregory begins by referring to the teaching of a particular 'Greek theologian' on 'the mind of the universe.'⁶⁹ This teaching, he believes, was closer to Christianity than that of the Sadducees who rejected the Holy Spirit

(an unexpected comparison that makes Greek tradition appear to be more Christian than the Hebrew). Gregory then refers to the plurality of opinions about the Holy Spirit that were circulating in the Christian East in his day.

The Sadducees alleged that the Holy Spirit does not exist at all and that there are no angels and no resurrection. I do not know what grounds they had for their scornful rejection of so many important proof-texts in the Old Testament. Some non-Christians, on the other hand, that is the more theologically-minded, with views nearer our own, had, I think, some mental pictures of him. They were divided, though, as to his name; 'mind of the universe,'⁷⁰ 'external mind'⁷¹ and such like titles. Among our own experts,⁷² some took the Holy Spirit to be an activity, some a creature, some God. Others were agnostic on this point out of reverence, because they felt Scripture had given no clear revelation either way. On this ground they offer him neither worship nor disrespect; they take up a half-way position. Among those who take him to be God, some keep their devotion inwardly, others venture to express it with their lips as well.⁷³

The last phrase refers to a different theological strategy between Gregory on the one hand, who openly proclaimed the divinity of the Spirit, and on the other those, like Basil, who confessed the dogma but did not dare to proclaim it aloud. Those who stop half-way between Arianism and Orthodoxy are most probably the *pneumatomachoi*. The expressions *product* and *activity* were used by Eunomius to designate the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴ Therefore, Gregory lists three parties: the Eunomians, the *pneumatomachoi*, and the Orthodox, all in opposition to each other. He also refers to the differences that existed among the Orthodox. To these parties Gregory makes further mention of those who are *more expert at measuring out the Godhead*; while confessing that *there are three Beings which are spiritually discerned*. They consider the Father *infinite in essence and power*, the Son 'infinite in power but not in essence,' and the Spirit *finite on both counts*. In so doing, these *experts* imitate those who call the Father *Creator*, the Son, *Co-worker*, and the Spirit, *Minister*, claiming that 'the rank inherent in the names implies a subordination of the realities.'⁷⁵

A discussion follows on terminology similar to the aforementioned argument about the divinity of the Son. Using expressions derived from Greek dialectics, Gregory states that the Holy Spirit can be either a *substance* or an *accident*. If the Spirit is an *accident*, He can be called an *activity* of God.⁷⁶ Being an activity, He 'must be put in operation, because He has no active power and ceases with the cessation of His production.' However, the Scriptures refer to the Spirit as an active power, not merely as a passive recipient of someone else's activity or energy: 'He says things, He decrees, He is grieved, He is vexed—all of which belong to a being *with* motion, not to the process of motion.' If, on the other hand, the Spirit is a *substance*, then He must be either a creature or God. But 'if He is a creature, why do we believe

in Him, why are we baptized in Him?' One can only believe in God, and if He is God, then He is not a *creature*, or a *product*, or a *fellow-servant*.⁷⁷ This reference to the baptismal formula⁷⁸ sounds more convincing than the preceding dialectical argument. Gregory emphasizes that belief in the divinity of the Holy Spirit is the experience of the Church: one can believe and be baptized only in God; therefore the Spirit is God.

Gregory's opponents offer additional syllogisms: '*The Holy Spirit must either be ingenerate or begotten. If He is ingenerate, there are two unoriginate beings. If He is begotten, we again have alternatives: either he is begotten of the Father or of the Son. If of the Father, there will be two sons who are brothers.*' To this Gregory replies that one ought not to apply notions peculiar to human relationship to the Godhead, otherwise, one ends up attributing to God the characteristics of gender.

Make them twins if you like, or one older than the other, if you have a penchant for corporeal ideas. If he is begotten of the Son, then our God would have a grandson. What could be odder than that? We certainly have here the arguments of people *wise to do evil, but unwilling to write what is good*.⁷⁹ For my part, if I saw the necessity of alternatives, I would accept the realities without being put off by the names. But because the Son is 'Son' in a more elevated sense of the word, and since we have no other term to express his consubstantial derivation from God, we ought not think it essential to transfer wholesale to the divine sphere earthly names associated with human family ties. By the same token, is our God male, because of the ascription of masculine nouns *God* and *Father* to God? Is the Godhead female, because the Greek word is feminine? Is the word *Spirit* neuter, because the Spirit is sterile? If you want to take this sad joke further one could say, as the trashy myths of old did, that God coupled with his own will and fathered the Son. We should then be faced with the bisexual God of Marcion, who pictured outlandish aeons.⁸⁰ Moreover, explain where *procession* fits into the picture, a term introduced by our Saviour. Or, because of a *third testament*—is one to delete from the Gospel the saying: *Which proceeds from the Father?*⁸¹ In so far as the Spirit proceeds from the Father, He is not creature; in as much as He is not begotten, He is not Son; and to the extent that procession is the mean between ingeneracy and generacy, he is God. Thus God escapes our previous syllogistic toils and shows Himself stronger than the exclusive alternatives.⁸²

An argument for the impossibility of applying characteristics of gender to the Godhead is of interest here. In the biblical tradition, the notion *God* was linked with male symbolism: God was referred to as Father and not as Mother. In the patristic tradition this male symbolism is retained: the question centers on the Father and the Son, not on Mother and Daughter. The word 'Spirit' is neutral in Greek but in some Semitic languages it is feminine (i.e. Hebrew *ruah*, or Syriac *ruha*); however, no attempt was made to set the female Spirit in opposition to the male Father.⁸³ Ancient Christian tradition

has far from anything similar to modern *inclusive language*; it did not question the legitimacy of male symbolism with regard to the Godhead. However, as is clear from Gregory, this symbolism was never taken to have the force of introducing gender categories into the Godhead. The grammatical gender of names applied to God was never taken as characterizing God as *male, female, or neutral*.

Gregory's attacks upon notions of a *male* Godhead, a *bisexual* God, or of God as having a grandson reflect a fundamental difference between him and his Arian opponents in understanding the significance of theological language. According to the latter, the name of an object is identical with its substance; for Gregory, on the contrary, name is but a certain approximation to the reality which stands behind it.⁸⁴ The same subject was at stake between Basil the Great and Eunomius. The latter claimed that the difference of names corresponds to the difference of substances, and that there is a direct link between name and substance.⁸⁵ Both Basil and Gregory Nazianzen saw an unacceptable anthropomorphism in the Eunomian theory of the divine names. For Gregory, as we have seen, there was no name or term which could adequately describe the divine reality: every human name is relative when the question concerns the Godhead. God is a mystery, and faith in Him is a mystery; all syllogisms about His nature are 'on overthrowing the faith and an emptying of mystery.'⁸⁶ Another was the question raised by the Arians: '*In what particular...does the Spirit fall short of being Son?*' Gregory responds: there is no deficiency in the Spirit, since God lacks in nothing. The Father is such, not because he falls short of being the Son, and the Son is not such because He falls short of being the Father. Fatherhood and sonship are not defects. The Son differs from the Father, and the Spirit differs from the Son, but there is no question of 'deficiency' or 'subordination.' There is one single nature and quality of the Godhead, but there are three distinct persons: 'the single whole is three in its individual distinctions.'⁸⁷

What, then? Is the Spirit God?

Certainly.

Is He of the same substance?

Yes, if He is God.⁸⁸

Finally, we have the main argument of Gregory's Arian opponent: belief in the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not based on Scripture. The *argumentum ad silentio* is approached by Gregory from various angles. First, he points to the fact that the terms 'ingenerate' and 'unoriginate,' the bastions of Arian trinitarian theology, are not found in Scripture.⁸⁹ Arians have either to abandon non-biblical terminology completely, or not reproach the Orthodox for using it. However, the rejection of all non-scriptural terms, that is, the acceptance of the principle of *Sola Scriptura* as a basis for theological investigation would mean, according to Gregory, the complete stagnation for dogmatic theology, because it would impede its development.

Secondly, Gregory expounds his famous theory, noted above, of the unfolding of dogma in the course of history. The absence of explicit references to the divinity of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is explained by the fact that this is a dogma introduced gradually and is fully revealed only in the post-New-Testamental period.

Thirdly, the teaching on the Holy Spirit is considered by Gregory to be within the framework of Christian baptismal practice. The Holy Spirit regenerates and deifies a person in the sacrament of Baptism, which by itself testifies to His divine nature.

Were the Spirit not to be worshipped, how could He deify me through Baptism? If He is to be worshipped, why not adored? And if adored, how can He fail to be God? One links with the other, ending in a truly golden link of salvation. From the Spirit comes our rebirth, from rebirth comes a new creation and from a new creation comes a recognition of the worth of Him who effected it.⁹⁰

This appeal to baptismal practice is not incidental.⁹¹ There is some evidence that Eunomians baptized 'not in the name of the Holy Trinity, but in the death of Christ,'⁹² and not by three immersions, but by one.⁹³ A deficient theology led to a malformation of liturgical practice and the rejection of the baptismal formula 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' which derives from Christ Himself. In the Orthodox tradition, on the contrary, the link was preserved between *lex orandi* and *lex credendi*, i.e. between liturgical practice and its dogmatic expression. For Gregory, the very fact that Baptism administered in the name of the Holy Trinity and attended by three immersions was thus commonly practiced in the Church, was good cause for proclaiming the equality, consubstantiality and divinity of all three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Finally, appealing to Scripture itself, Gregory attempts to demonstrate that, contrary to Arian claims, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is implicitly stated in the New Testament. Gregory's faith does not teach a certain *strange, non-scriptural God*.⁹⁴ On the contrary, Scripture clearly reveals that the Spirit is God. 'Christ is born, the Spirit is His forerunner; Christ is baptized, the Spirit bears Him witness; Christ is tempted, the Spirit leads Him up; Christ performs miracles, the Spirit accompanies him; Christ ascends, the Spirit fills His place. Is there any significant function belonging to God, which the Spirit does not perform?' The names of the Spirit used in Scripture also confirm His divinity: *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ, Mind of Christ, Spirit of the Lord, and the Lord, Spirit of Adoption, of Truth, of Freedom, Spirit of Wisdom, of Understanding, of Counsel, of Might, of Knowledge, of True Religion, and of the Fear of God*; the Spirit which is *good, righteous, in command*. The qualities with which the Spirit is endowed in Scripture are characteristic of God, not of a created being: 'He makes us His temple, He deifies, He makes us complete, He initiates us in such a way that He both

precedes Baptism and is wanted after it. All that God actively performs, he performs. Divided in fiery tongues, He distributes graces, makes Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.⁹⁵

Gregory emphasizes the deifying role of the Holy Spirit in Baptism and in the experience of the Church. The doctrine of humanity's deification is a *leitmotif* in his entire dogmatic and mystical system: salvation for Gregory is nothing other than deification. For Eunomius, on the other hand, salvation has nothing to do with deification.⁹⁶ This divergence of opinion between Gregory and Eunomius strikes at the very heart of the Christian faith; their arguments are not simply about trinitarian terminology but primarily about the salvation of humankind.

Gregory summarizes his pneumatological doctrine in the *Discourse on Pentecost*, where, once again, he declares his belief in the divinity of the Holy Spirit:

They who reduce the Holy Spirit to the rank of a creature are blasphemers.... But they who confess Him God are inspired by God and are illustrious in their mind; and they who go further and call Him so, if to well-disposed hearers are exalted; if to the low, are not reserved enough, for they commit pearls to clay, and the noise of thunder to weak ears, and the sun to feeble eyes.... Confess, my friends, the Trinity to be of one Godhead; or if you will, of one nature; and we will pray the Spirit to give you this word 'God'... The Holy Spirit always existed, and exists, and always will exist. He neither had a beginning, nor will He have an end; but He was everlastingly ranked with and numbered with the Father and the Son.⁹⁷

THE UNITY OF THE TRINITY

The Trinity in Gregory's vision is the unity of the three Hypostases, equal and consubstantial with each other, united among themselves by the bond of love. Tri-unity is not merely an abstract idea: it is a truth which can be revealed when one imitates God. Unity in the Trinity is a mystery revealed to people so that they may live united by bonds of peace and love. Jesus Christ himself prayed that the example of unity which exists between Him and His Father should inspire His disciples to preserve and develop unity among themselves: 'that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us.'⁹⁸ This unity which exists in the Trinity provides humans with a moral lesson, giving them the example of love and accord which must reign among them: '[The Holy Trinity] is one God... not only because of the accord⁹⁹ but also because of the identity of substance. This is why those who manifest their adherence to the good of peace are close to God and things divine... But those whose character is militant belong to the opposite side.'¹⁰⁰

Gregory lived in an era when the Christian Church was divided. Bishops belonging to opposing parties anathematized each other and broke eucharistic

fellowship. Divisions and schisms often arose even among bishops belonging to the same theological party. The reconciliation of the various groups that were at odds with one another was among the primary tasks Basil the Great took seriously. In order to achieve reconciliation, he was prepared to make concessions even in doctrinal matters (such as the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit). ...*There is need of much care and great diligence*' he wrote ...*that the parts which have hitherto been broken apart be united again.*¹⁰¹

However, neither Basil nor Gregory himself was able to remain above all divisions and schisms; nor could they protect themselves from being involved in the struggles between the ecclesiastical parties. Throughout his life Gregory made several attempts to appease opposing parties, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. While assisting his father in Nazianzus, he was able to reconcile a group of local monks with their bishop. In Constantinople, Gregory tried to reconcile Meletians and Paulinians, this time, however, without success. When calling to accord and reconciliation, Gregory reminded his listeners of the harmony, peace, love and unanimity which reigns among the persons of the Holy Trinity. In *Discourse 23*, he speaks of the need for rival groups to be united against their common enemy, Arianism, citing the Trinity as an example.

The Trinity is in reality the Trinity, my brothers... It is lives and life, lights and light, goods and good, glories and glory, the True, the Truth, and the Spirit of Truth, the holy beings and the holy substance; each of Them is God... but the three are also God... Behold, we give hands to each other in front of your eyes! These are the works of the Trinity which we glorify and worship in the same manner.¹⁰²

According to Gregory, there is a direct link between the unity of the faithful collected into the single body of the Church and the unity of the Trinity. Dogmatic innovations are dangerous not only because they introduce mistaken ideas but also because they destroy church unity. Developing this theme in *Discourse 22*, Gregory emphasizes that unity in major theological questions is necessary, but he adds that this does not presuppose complete unification of theological terminology: 'Let us not establish another definition of piety except that we should worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one Godhead in three, and one power... Having defined this, let us be unanimous also in other things as confessing one and the same trinity, almost one and the same dogma, one and the same body.'¹⁰³ The phrase *almost one and the same dogma* indicates that within the one body of the Church there may exist certain minor doctrinal differences, perhaps on the level of theological language rather than of dogma itself, provided that unity is preserved in major theological issues. This is how Basil the Great imagined church unity. He thought that differences in theological formulations must not prevent those who have parted from the unity of the Church to be reconciled with it.

Let us seek nothing more, but merely propose the Creed of Nicaea to the brethren who wish to join us; and if they agree to this, let us demand also that the Holy Spirit shall not be called a creature, and that those who do so call Him shall not be communicants with them. But beyond these things I think nothing should be insisted upon by us.¹⁰⁴ For I am convinced that by longer association together and by mutual experience without strife, even if there should be need for some addition made for clarification, the Lord who worketh all things together unto good to such as love Him¹⁰⁵ will concede this.¹⁰⁶

Both Basil and Gregory, therefore, considered a certain *minimum* of dogmatic convergence to be a sufficient basis for reconciliation and did not demand equality of theological formulations: various approaches to the mystery of the unity of the Trinity can coexist within *almost one and the same dogma*. The difference between Basil and Gregory consisted, as we remember, in that they set the limits of *almost one and the same dogma* in a different way: Gregory insisted that the divinity of the Holy Spirit should be proclaimed openly, while Basil was prepared to make concession in this matter for the sake of unity.¹⁰⁷

This theme of unity within the Trinity is a *leitmotif* in the *Theological Orations* where Gregory concerns himself not so much with church unity, but rather with trinitarian doctrine itself, which, he believed, had been corrupted by the Arians. He was also disturbed by accusations made by the Arians against the Orthodox, in particular, by their statement that the Orthodox believe in three Gods.

*If, it is asserted, we use the word 'God' three times, must there not be three Gods? We have one God, because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or derived in power.... The Godhead exists undivided in separate beings. It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Beings. When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship.*¹⁰⁸

Unity of the Trinity, therefore, is conditioned by the unity of the Father, in whose Person, according to Cappadocian theology, ideas of *the primal cause* and of *monarchy* were connected.¹⁰⁹ Basil speaks quite unambiguously about this: *God is one because the Father is one.*¹¹⁰ The recognition of the Son and of the Spirit as equal and consubstantial with the Father by no means diminishes the latter's significance as first and primal cause, and thus as the source of unity within the Trinity.

How the three Hypostases are united lies beyond the limits of human understanding; nothing on earth can be likened to it. The Byzantine authors, in speaking of the unity in the Trinity, rely upon several traditional comparisons used solely to render the doctrine more vivid and with greater comprehension to a simple believer. It was always argued that no comparison can exhaust the mystery of the Trinity. By way of example, Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the first human family as an image of the Holy Trinity: as Seth was born from Adam, and Eve was created from Adam's rib, so the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father.¹¹¹ This was a familiar image in Cappadocian thought; we find it also in Gregory of Nyssa.¹¹²

In *Discourse 31*, Gregory offers three further images: the first and most traditional is that of a source, spring, and river;¹¹³ the second is that of the sun, beam, and light; the third is that of a sunbeam which throws its rays onto a wall: *it joins and parts so quickly that it is away before the eye can catch hold of it*. All three images, however, have their shortcomings. The first may admit the idea of an incessant stream of Deity and import the suggestion of a numerical unit. The second sounds as if the Godhead were composite, with the Father being a substance and where the Son and the Spirit are attributes of God, and not individual beings. The third may imply that there is movement in God and that something causes this movement, while in fact *the lack of a fixed, natural stability* is inconceivable in the case of God.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, concludes Gregory, 'I resolved that it was best to have done with images and shadows, deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express the reality. I resolved to keep closer to the more truly religious view and rest content with a few words... To the best of my powers I will persuade all humans to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power.'¹¹⁵

Gregory speaks of the Holy Trinity as the most hidden mystery of the Christian faith: He is 'the Holy of Holies, Which is hidden even from the Seraphim, and is glorified with a thrice-repeated "Holy" meeting in one ascription of the title Lord and God.'¹¹⁶ The incomprehensible and supernatural mystery of the unity of the Holy Trinity evokes Gregory's admiration. In his 40th *Discourse*, dedicated to the Epiphany, Gregory speaks of the unity of the Trinity within the framework of the baptismal practice of the Church:

...Before all, keep I pray you the good deposit,¹¹⁷ by which I live and work, and which I desire to have as the companion of my departure; with which I endure all that is so distressful, and despise all delights; the confession of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This I commit unto you today; with this I will baptize you and make you grow. This I give you to share, and to defend all your life, the one Godhead and power, found in the three in unity, and comprising the Three separately, not unequal, in substances or natures, neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite conjunction of three infinite Ones, each God when considered in Himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Spirit; the

three one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; One God because of the monarchy. No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendour of the three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one of the three I think of Him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of That One so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the Three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.¹¹⁸

For Gregory, the unity of the Holy Trinity was not just a subject of a theological controversy: it was for him primarily an object of prayerful meditation. His attitude to the Trinity is characterized by ardent love and warm devotion; no author before him had referred to the Trinity in such a personal way. He often spoke of 'my Trinity.' The struggle for true trinitarian doctrine strengthened his personal love for the Trinity, which became almost a part of his own biography. It is not by mere chance that he finishes his autobiographical poem, *De vita sua*, with words dedicated to the Holy Trinity:

...What shall I give the churches? My tears.
 For God has led me to this point,
 after letting my life roll through many vicissitudes;
 where will it end? Tell me, Word of God.
 I pray that it will end up in the unshakeable home
 where lives the bright union of my Trinity
 by whose faint reflection we are now raised up.¹¹⁹

NOTES

¹ Matt. 28:19.² John 5:18.³ John 10:30.⁴ John 14:28.⁵ *To Autolycus* 2, 15.⁶ See, e.g., Kelly, *Doctrines*, 115–123.⁷ Cited in Epiphanius, *Panarion* 62, 1.⁸ Cf. Pseudo-Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 4, 11.⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 62, 1.

¹⁰ It is difficult to state which theological party is referred to as ‘ultra-orthodox.’ J. Bernardi thinks that Gregory does not speak here about a theological party but refers to the monks of Nazianzus who were overly involved in theological arguments (*SC* 247, 137, note 9). This explanation, however, seems rather simplistic.

¹¹ The Greek word *areimaneis* (meaning ‘full of warlike frenzy’) was applied to the followers of Arius.

¹² *Disc.* 2, 37, 1–38, 15 (*SC* 247, 136–140).¹³ *On the Holy Spirit* 1, 14.¹⁴ *On John* 2, 6 (*PG* 14, 128).¹⁵ *Disc.* 11, 6, 26–29 (*SC* 405, 344).¹⁶ Cf. Phil. 1:27.¹⁷ Cf. 2 Tim. 1:14.¹⁸ The Fathers of the Council of Nicaea are implied.¹⁹ This refers to Sabellianism.²⁰ *Disc.* 6, 22, 1–19 (*SC* 405, 174–176).²¹ Heb. 12:26–27; Hag. 2:6; Matt. 27:51.²² Ex. 20:3–5.²³ cf. Mt. 27:51; Heb. 9:3–15; Gal. 2:14ff.²⁴ Heb. 12:18.²⁵ Acts 16:3.²⁶ Acts 21:26.²⁷ Gal. 5:11.²⁸ *Disc.* 31, 25, 1–28, 4 (*SC* 250, 322–330) = Wickham, 292–293.²⁹ *Against the Heresies* 3, 1, 1.³⁰ *Against the Heresies* 3, 2, 1–2.³¹ Cf. Is. 6:2–3.³² Ps. 36:9.³³ Cf. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 18, 47; 26, 64.³⁴ Cf. Mark 3:17.³⁵ Cf. John 1:1.³⁶ John 10:30.³⁷ John 14:23.³⁸ Matt. 28:19.³⁹ Cf. Acts 5:4.⁴⁰ *Disc.* 34, 13, 1–14, 8 (*SC* 318, 220–224).⁴¹ Cf. 2 Cor. 3:15–16.⁴² Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *That There Are Not Three Gods*.⁴³ See Pelikan, *Emergence*, 219–221.

⁴⁴ The notion of the identity of action of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity was a *leitmotiv* of anti-Eunomian writings of all three Cappadocians and was used to repulse accusations in tritheism.

⁴⁵ *Disc.* 29, 2, 1–15 (SC 250, 178–180) = Wickham, 245–246 (translation modified). See Maximus the Confessor's commentary on this text in *Ambigua* (PG 91, 1036 AC).

⁴⁶ Cited by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 69, 6.

⁴⁷ Cited by Athanasius, *On the Sayings of Dionysius* (PG 25, 505 A).

⁴⁸ See Moreschini, *Platonismo*, 1390–1391.

⁴⁹ See Louth, *Origins*, 37–38.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5, 1, 6 and 5, 2, 1. According to Plotinus, the One is 'the first cause,' and the Being, 'the second cause.'

⁵¹ *Disc.* 29, 2, 15–27 (SC 250, 180) = Wickham, 246 (translation modified). Cf. John 15:26.

⁵² Cf. Norris, *Faith*, 136.

⁵³ *Disc.* 29, 3, 1–11 (SC 250, 180–182) = Wickham, 246.

⁵⁴ One can note that the Arian formula, 'there was when the Son was not in existence,' did not necessarily refer to the Son's birth 'in time.' Eunomians did not introduce the category of time but only stated that from the beginning the Father was alone, without the Son. In other words, there is a distance between the being of the Father and the generation of the Son, but this distance is not necessarily of a temporal nature. Therefore Gregory's argument is somewhat off the mark. See Norris, *Faith*, 187.

⁵⁵ *Disc.* 29, 3, 14–21 (SC 250, 182) = Wickham, 246–247.

⁵⁶ *Disc.* 29, 4, 1 (SC 250, 182) = Wickham, 247.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Gregory the Wonderworker, *To Theopompos* 7.

⁵⁸ *Carm.* 2, 1, 17 (PG 37, 1263).

⁵⁹ On Gregory's understanding of the divine will see Meijering, *God*, 103–113.

⁶⁰ *Disc.* 29, 5, 1–9, 38 (SC 250, 184–196) = Wickham, 247–250.

⁶¹ *Disc.* 29, 10, 1–22 (SC 250, 196–198) = Wickham, 251. On the genealogy of the term *AGENNHTOS* see Lebreton, 'In the Eunomian system, the notions of *the ingenerate* as a synonym of the ineffable Deity and of *ingenerateness* as a synonym of the divine essence played an important role. *The ingenerate* as the highest stage in the hierarchy of beings is, according to Eunomius, he who generates everything else. The system of Eunomius can be regarded as a continuation of the Neoplatonic attempts to explain the genesis of the multiple from the One. See Daniélou, *Eunom.*, 428; cf. Abramowski, *Eunomios*, 946.

⁶² *Disc.* 29, 16, 1–14 (SC 250, 210) = Wickham, 254–255.

⁶³ *Letter* 102 (2nd *Letter to Cledonius*; SC 208, 70).

⁶⁴ Gregory addresses his father.

⁶⁵ Cf. Matt. 5:15.

⁶⁶ *Disc.* 12, 6, 4–15 (SC 405, 360).

⁶⁷ Cf. Galtier, *Esprit*, 177.

⁶⁸ Rondet, *Sin.*, 98.

⁶⁹ Gregory usually applied the epithet 'Greek theologian' to Plato; see Pepin, *Philosophie-théologie* XIV, 251–252.

⁷⁰ Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 97cd; *Philebus* 28c.

⁷¹ Cf. Aristotle, *On the Origin of Animals* II, 3, 9.

⁷² The word *expert* is used sarcastically.

⁷³ *Disc.* 31, 5, 2–16 (SC 250, 282–284) = Wickham, 280–281.

⁷⁴ See his *Apology* 25–26 (Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, 66–70). The term *product* is synonymous with the term *activity*, which is used by Eunomius with regard to the Son; see *Apology* 17–18 (*The Extant Works*, 54–56).

⁷⁵ *Disc.* 31, 5, 16–23 (SC 250, 284) = Wickham, 281 (translation modified). On the terminology of *subordination* see Daniélou, *Akolouthia*, 236. The Greek term literally means *sequence, succession*; to express the idea of *subordination* Gregory also uses a term that literally means, *letting down slackening inferiority*.

⁷⁶ On the background and use of this term by Eunomius see Barnes, 'Background.'

⁷⁷ *Disc.* 31, 6, 1–22 (*SC* 250, 284–286) = Wickham, 281–282.

⁷⁸ This is one of the most frequent themes in fourth-century polemics against Arianism: see Williams, 'Baptism,' 149.

⁷⁹ *Jerem.* 4:22.

⁸⁰ The teaching on 'aeons' is characteristic of the Gnostic system of Valentine rather than Marcion (thus in several manuscripts 'Valentine and Marcion' is placed instead of 'Marcion'—see *SC* 250, 288).

⁸¹ *John* 15:26.

⁸² *Disc.* 31, 7, 17–8, 15 (*SC* 250, 288–290) = Wickham, 282–283 (translation modified).

⁸³ Cf. Harvey, *Imagery*, 114.

⁸⁴ Cf. Norris, *Faith*, 192.

⁸⁵ See Basil, *Against Eunomius* 2, 4. Cf. Eunomius, *Apology of the Apology* 3, 5 (cited in Gregory of Nyssa, *Opera* II, 166–175).

⁸⁶ *Disc.* 31, 23, 22–23 (*SC* 250, 320) = Wickham, 292.

⁸⁷ *Disc.* 31, 9, 1–10 (*SC* 250, 290–292) = Wickham, 283.

⁸⁸ *Disc.* 31, 10, 1–2 (*SC* 250, 292) = Wickham, 283.

⁸⁹ *Disc.* 31, 23, 1–2 (*SC* 250, 318) = Wickham, 291.

⁹⁰ *Disc.* 31, 28, 9–15 (*SC* 250, 332) = Wickham, 295.

⁹¹ Cf. reference to the baptismal formula in Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 28.

⁹² See Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* 5, 24.

⁹³ This practice is referred to in the 7th canon of the Second Ecumenical Council.

⁹⁴ *Disc.* 31, 1, 6 (*SC* 250, 276) = Wickham, 279.

⁹⁵ *Disc.* 31, 29, 5–36 (*SC* 250, 332–336) = Wickham, 295–297.

⁹⁶ Cf. Norris, *Faith*, 67.

⁹⁷ *Disc.* 41, 6, 1–8; 8, 1–3; 9, 1–3 (*SC* 358, 326–334).

⁹⁸ *John* 17:21.

⁹⁹ I.e. accord among the three Hypostases.

¹⁰⁰ *Disc.* 6, 13, 9–15 (*SC* 405, 154–156).

¹⁰¹ Letter 113 (ed. Courtonne, 17) = Deferrari II, 223.

¹⁰² *Disc.* 23, 10, 11–13, 3 (*SC* 270, 300–306).

¹⁰³ *Disc.* 22, 12, 1–9 (*SC* 270, 242–244).

¹⁰⁴ I.e. open recognition of the divinity of the Holy Spirit should not be insisted upon.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Rom.* 8:28.

¹⁰⁶ Letter 113 (ed. Courtonne, 17) = Deferrari II, 225.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. May, *Kappadokier*, 331.

¹⁰⁸ *Disc.* 31, 13, 5–14, 13 (*SC* 250, 300–304) = Wickham, 286.

¹⁰⁹ See Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 21 and 38. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Disc.* 29, 15, 1–18 (*SC* 250, 208). For an outline of modern scholarly views on Gregory Nazianzen's interpretation of the notion of the 'primal cause' see Egan, 'Primal Cause,' 23–28. See also Egan, 'Synonyms,' for useful comments on the terminology of the 'primal cause.'

¹¹⁰ *Homily* 24, 3 (*PG* 31, 605A).

¹¹¹ *Carm.* 1, 1, 3 (*PG* 37, 411).

¹¹² *On What is 'In the Image'* (*PG* 44, 1329 C).

¹¹³ Cf. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Holy Spirit* 1, 19; Basil the Great, *Against Eunomius* 5.

¹¹⁴ *Disc.* 31, 31, 1–33, 7 (*SC* 250, 338–340) = Wickham, 297–298.

¹¹⁵ *Disc.* 31, 33, 10–19 (*SC* 250, 340–342) = Wickham, 298–299.

¹¹⁶ *Disc.* 45, 4 (*PG* 36, 628–629).

¹¹⁷ Cf. 2 *Tim.* 1:14.

¹¹⁸ *Disc.* 40, 41, 1–24 (*SC* 358, 292–294).

¹¹⁹ *De vita sua* 1943–1949 (*PG* 37, 1165–1166) = White, 153.

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ST AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOX TRIADOLGY OF THE FOURTH CENTURY¹

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The essay is devoted to finding the similarities and differences between the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Augustine and that of the Great Cappadocian Fathers. As a result of this careful analysis of the texts of St. Augustine and of comparative texts of the Cappadocian Fathers the author draws the conclusion that the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Augustine is strikingly different from the Trinitarian doctrine of the Great Cappadocian Fathers and of other Eastern Fathers, because, first of all, Augustine has consciously refused to draw a distinction in the Godhead between *essence generically conceived* (as common) and *hypostasis* as an individual (as special). In addition he has identified the *hypostaseis* of the Holy Trinity with certain Divine properties or abilities, such as *being*, *intellect* and *will*, which the Cappadocian Fathers ascribed to the one Divine essence or nature of the Holy Trinity. Finally, in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Augustine mixed theological and economical aspects and consequently came to an inadmissible (from the point of view of the Cappadocian Fathers) doctrine of the double procession of the Holy Spirit. Thus the author believes that the Trinitarian doctrine of Augustine and many other western theologians, who followed him, can be characterized as a kind of modalism or, at least, a functionalism.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

It is common knowledge that Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Trinity which was the foundation for triadology of the majority of Western theologians, is essentially different from the doctrine of the Eastern Fathers of the fourth and later centuries.² We may suppose, however, that due to the Augustinian influence upon the consequent Western theological tradition, this question needs more detailed study so that we may see the Western tradition more fully

and clearly drawn. And this is necessary so as to draw the contrasts and similarities between it and the Eastern tradition. The main goal of this article is the narrower one of pointing out the similarities and differences between the trinitarian doctrine of Augustine and the Orthodox theologians who were his contemporaries, in particular, the Great Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Gregory of Nyssa.

2. TERMINOLOGY

We will begin by offering a concise analysis of Augustine's trinitarian terminology, which was very different from the Cappadocian one. The former account, as we will find is rather complicated and difficult to understand. The bulk of his doctrine is presented in the Fifth and Seventh books of *De Trinitate* (400–415 A.D.). But before we embark on this it might be helpful for us to draw attention to the main trinitarian terminology used by the Cappadocian Fathers.

The Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity rested upon Aristotle's doctrine of the *categories*. With his use of the concept of *ousia* (essence),³ Aristotle first singled out individual, singular entities, which he called *first essences*; and, second, *general essences* (*genera* and *species*), which he named *secondary essences*. According to the terminology of St. Basil the Great (*Ep.* 38; 214; 236 *et al.*) and the Cappadocians, the notion of *essence* (*ousia*)⁴ began to designate, but the designation involved *general essences* (*to koinon*), and *genera* and *species*, (*eidos*), whereas the notions of *individual* and *particular* (*to idion*) were matched up with *hypostasis* (*upostasis*, which literally translates as, *sub-standing*, *standing as the basis*, or with the appropriate verb form,—*ufistamai*, or as *face*, (*prosopon*)), when the focus is upon *rational entities*, see Basil Magn. *Ep.* 38; 214; 236; Greg. Nyss. *De communis notionibus*; *Ad Ablabium*, etc).⁵ The rest of Aristotle's categories (*quality*, *relation*, *action et al.*) the Cappadocians used to describe the *one Divine essence*, rather than one of the *hypostasis* of the Holy Trinity.⁶ This is why the trinitarian formula of the Cappadocians and the predominant majority of the Greek Fathers since approximately the first half of the fourth century has been *one essence, three hypostasis* (*mia ousia treis upostaseis*).⁷

In response to the Greek formula, Augustine proposes two corresponding Latin locutions: first, *una essentia, tres substantias*, and, second, *una essentia vel substantia, tres personas* (*De Trinit.*, V, 10). The commonly known explanation runs as follows: the Latin word *essentia* (*being*), which has a relatively recent origin, deriving from the verb *to be* (*esse*), corresponds to the Greek word *ousia*, which also derives from the verb *to be*, *einai*. During and perhaps before Augustine, the expression (in English) for the Greek word *ousia* was *substance*, and according to Augustine the latter notion derives

from the Latin verb *subsistere* (stand-under-itself, i.e. to be (lie) at the basis, to be the basis, to be independent, *De Trinit.* V, 3; 9–10; VII, 8; 10).⁸ In the Latin language, the term *essentia* means nothing other than *substance*. (*De Trinit.* VII, 7). In reality the Latin word for *substance* does not match up with the Greek word *ousia* but *upostasis*, which takes its origin from the verb *subsistere* (to be under, lie at the basis, to be independent, *upo-staseis* = *sub-stare*). This is the root of all Augustinian ambiguity and Latin trinitarian terminology in general. Augustine himself recognized it. He gave the directive, when we use *essentia* and mean by it *substantia*, then we dare not in respect to the Holy Trinity say: one *essentia*, three *substances*, but we should say: one *essentia* or *substantia*, and three *persons*" (*De Trinit.* V, 10; VII, 7). For *essence*, Augustine uses the word *substantia* or the word *natura* (nature, *De Trinit.* VII, 7, 10). The latter expression is older than the word *substantia*. Earlier it was equivalent to the English *matter* (*materia communis*) when a plurality of things was in mind. (*De Trinit.* VII, 11)

In what sense did Augustine understand the Latin terms, *essentia*, *substantia*, and *natura* when he was speaking of the Holy Trinity? "When we try to ask what are these three (*quid tria vel quid tres*)..., Augustine says, "...we begin to search for some special or generic name (*aliquid speciale vel generale nomen*), which embraces these Three, but we meet with failure, because the absolute perfection of the Godhead transcends the capacity of common language expression. Indeed, God is more accessible in truth, than through the means of verbal expressions, His being has more truth, than it is attainable" (*De Trinit.* VII, 7). Furthermore Augustine examines the Cappadocian terminology to give expression to the relationship of *genus*, *species* and *individual*, but his search leaves no final conclusions: "When we say that Jacob is not the same as Abraham, and Isaac is not the same as Abraham or Jacob, we recognize that exercise involves three individuals literally: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But when we ask, What are these three (*quid tres*), we respond, *three men*, thus referring to them as a plurality (*pluraliter*) each individually with his special name (*speciale nomine*), or we may say three living beings, if we use the generic name (*generaliter*). (*De Trinit.* VII, 7).

And when we assign one name which has a *plurality* (*pluraliter*) of reference, but who together (*commune*) share in the idea, what *is* man, then they are called *three men*. As far as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are said to be Three, let us examine what (these) Three are (individually) and what they have in common? First, their *commonality* cannot consist in what it is to be the Father (i.e. to be as *the Father*), since if this were so, then they would each have been fathers in relation to one another, as we might say for example, *friends*, as when we are speaking of individuals having this relationship to one another can be called *three friends*, for (as such) they exist in relation to one another. Now the persons of the Holy Trinity are not also each *three Sons*, inasmuch as neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit are sons. They are not three Holy Spirits either, because neither the Father nor the Son, bear the proper name the *Gift of God* (*donum Dei*), but only the Holy Spirit. So, who are these Three and how are we to give a

proper verbal account reflecting who they are individually, and the relationship(s) they bear to each other? If they all three are persons then the name person (*persona*) is a proper common name for all three. Therefore each is a bearer of this special or general name, if we follow a conventional use of this term. Further, where there are not any differences in nature, a plurality of things can be called by their generic name as well as by a special one. Thus, where there are no differences in *being* (*essentiae*), it is necessary that the Three in question have a mutual special name, which however, doesn't occur. The very idea of face (*person*) is a generic name (reference), even as it is applied to or refers to a human person (*De Trinit.* VII, 7).

Now Augustine experiences the following doubts which finally lead him to attempt a complete refutation of the Cappadocian approach to understanding and giving account of the Holy Trinity.

If the being (essence) is a *special name shared* by all Three, then why are they not called *three beings*, as, for example, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called *three men*, because *man* is a special name common to all men? If however, being is not a special name, but a generic one, then if *man, animal, tree, star, angel*, etc., are all called *beings* (*essence*), then why aren't they (*persons*) called *three beings* as well, just as *three horses* are called *three animals*? So, if They in virtue of the oneness of the Trinity are not called *three beings*, but *one being*, then why would they in virtue of this same oneness of the Trinity not be called *three Substances* or *three Persons*, instead of *one Substance* or *one Person*? Indeed, as they share the same name for *being*, and therefore each is separately called being, so in the same manner They bear the *mutual name both for substance and/or person*. The very thing we spoke about concerning our (Latin) word usage, is now to be understood of *Persons*, but working with the Greek expression for substances (*Hypostasis*). They do speak of three Substances (*Hypostasis*) and one being, and so we speak of three Persons, and one being, or substance (*De Trinit.*, VII, 8).

Further, Augustine began to formulate more clearly his own position thus.

If it is the same thing for God *to be* (*esse*) as it is for him to *subsist* (to be independent, i.e. *to be hypostatical, subsistere*), then the individual members are *not* to be called *three Substances* (*Hypostasis*), because to call them *three beings* is to attribute the same thing to God. If for example, each is wise, then we end up attributing *wise* three times. We say neither three essences, nor do we properly attribute *wise* three times. Because it is the same thing for Him to be God as it is *to be* (*esse*), therefore it is neither right to attribute to him *three beings*, nor the predicate *three Gods*. If it is for God one thing *to be* (*esse*), and another *to be independently* (i.e. *hypostatically, subsistere*), in the same way as it is one thing for God *to be*, and another *to be the Father*, or *to be the Lord*, (so what He is, *quod est*), then these predicates are what He is called in respect to Himself (*ad se*). But with regard to relational predicates, as when He is called *Father* in relation to the Son, and *Lord* in relation to the serving creatures, then He is thought of as subsisting relatively (*relative subsistit*), and further, He *relatively begets* and *relatively reigns*. So, then substance (hypostasis) will no longer be *substance* properly conceived, because it (*substance*) will then be relative (*relativum*). As for *being*, He is called *essence*, but as for *subsisting*, we properly speak of *substance*. But it is absurd that substance should be thought of and spoken of as *being in relation*, for everything subsists in respect to itself (*ad se ipsum subsistit*) apart from relational concerns, how much more God! (*De Trinit.* VII, 9).

Thus, Augustine states that for God *to be* (*esse* = *ousia*) is equal to his subsisting (*subsistere, hypostasis*), but the latter (subsisting for God) doesn't

correspond to the notion *Person*, as the Cappadocians thought. The main principle underlying that statement is a conviction for Augustine⁹ that if God is thought of as absolutely simple, as a primeval being, then his essence should be taken as identical with his traits, actions, and outgoing. Moreover, God doesn't know discriminations, and this assertion is based on Aristotle's ten categories which includes the discrimination between the first (i.e. single) and second (i.e. generic-special) essence.¹⁰ Note that this doctrinal posture is absolutely opposed to the Cappadocean Fathers, who made wide usage of Aristotelean categories in the formulation of their trinitarian doctrine. However, Augustine defends his position with great energy and persistence in the majority of his dogmatic writings (*On faith and free will*, IX; *Confession*, IV, 29; *On Some Dogmatical Questions*, *On the Holy Trinity*, V, 6; VI, 6; VII, 2, 10; *The City of God*, XI, 10 *et al.*). He even thought that those not able to understand him should purify their hearts (Lk. *De fide et symbolo*, IX).

The main differences between Western and Eastern theology are doctrinal, and these concerns are not confined to trinitarian questions only.¹¹ We have an example of a justification of Augustine's doctrine in the same book VII *On the Trinity*:

If, however, it is fitting that God should be said to subsist (For this word is rightly applied to those things, in which as subjects those things are, which are said to be in a subject, as color or shape in body. For body subsists, and so is substance; but those things are in the body, which subsists and is their subject, and they are not substances, but are in a substance: and so, if either that color or that shape ceases to be, it does not deprive the body of being a body, because it is not of the being of body, that it should retain this or that shape or color; therefore neither changeable nor simple things are properly called substances) so that He can be properly called a substance, then there is something in Him as it were in a subject, and He is not simple, i.e. such that to Him to be is the same as anything else that is said concerning Him in respect to Himself; as, for instance, great, omnipotent, good, and whatever of this kind is not unfitly said of God. But it is an impiety to say that God subsists, and is a subject in relation to His own goodness, and that this goodness is not a substance or rather essence, and that God Himself is not His own goodness, but that it is in Him as in a subject. And hence it is clear that God is improperly called substance, in order that He may be understood to be, by the more usual name essence, which He is truly and properly called; so that perhaps it is right that God alone should be called essence. For He is truly alone, because He is unchangeable; and declared this to be His own name to His servant Moses, when He says: "I am that I am"; and, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: He who is hath sent me unto you." However, whether He be called *essence*, which He is properly called, or *substance*, which He is called improperly, He is called both in respect to Himself, not relative to anything; whence for God to be is the same thing as to subsist; and so the Trinity, if one essence, is also one substance. Perhaps therefore they are more conveniently called three persons than three substances (*De Trinit.*, VII, 10).

Thus Augustine, coming from his presupposition about the identity of God in his essence, being and attributes, on the one hand, eliminated the distinction between essence as a common generic-special nature and hypostasis as individual, which was so emphatically held by the Cappadoceans,¹² on the other, by the same token Augustine eliminated the

distinction between God's essence and God's names, attributes and energies, which was so diligently underlined by the Cappadocians in their polemic with Eunomius.

On returning to the Cappadocian theme concerning the relationship of *genus*, *species* and *individual*, Augustine speaks:

If the *essence* is *genus*, and *substance* or *person* *species*, as some Greeks think..., then They (The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) ought be called three *essences*, as they are called three *Substances* (*Hypostases*) or *Persons*; as, for instance, three horses are called three horses, and the same are called three animals, since horse is the species, and animal is genus. But if the Cappadocians say that the name of *substance* or person does not signify (*hypostasis*) *species*, but something singular and *individual* (*liquid singulare atque individuum*), so that any one is called a *substance*, or *person*, as he is called a *man*, for *man* is common to all men. But in the same manner as he is called *this or that man*, for example, as Abraham, as Isaac, as Jacob, or anyone else who, if present, could be pointed out with the finger, so will the same reason (*eatem ratio*) apply to these too. For as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called *three individuals*, *so are they called three men* and *three souls*. Why then are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, if we are also to reason about them according to genus and species and individual, not also called three *Essences*, as they are called three *Substances* or *Persons*?¹³ But if essence is a *species*, as man is a species, those are three which we call substances or persons, and then they have the same species in common, in such a way as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have in common the species which is called *man*; not as man subdivided into Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So can one man be subdivided as regarding several single men? This is altogether impossible, since one man is already a single man. Why then is one essence subdivided into three substances or persons?" (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11).¹⁴

Looking further into the issue of the meaning of the word *nature*, the Latin term usually used as an equivalent also means *common matter*. On this issue as well Augustine is far from the Cappadocians: "Inasmuch as three men are called one nature (*una natura*) or three men share the same nature, then it is possible to say about them that three men are from the same *nature* (*ex eadem natura*), as far as, from the same nature three other men be said to derive. But in that essence of Trinity (*in illa essentia Trinitatis*) no Person could exist from the same essence (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11).

As for the term *person*, which corresponds to the Greek word *prosopon*, (*De Trinit.* VII, 11) Augustine on the one hand, points out that the word expresses the relation of one thing to another and corresponds to Aristotle's category of *relation to* (*ad aliquid, pros ti*), or, in Latin, simply *relatio* (*relation*) (*De Trinit.*, VI, 6).¹⁵

Augustine comments:

but because the Father is not called the Father except in that He has a Son, and the Son, Son, except in that He has a Father, these things are not said working with substance; because each of them is not so called in relation to Himself, but are used reciprocally and in relation each to the other; nor yet according to accident, because both the being called the Father, and the being called the Son, are eternal and unchangeable to them. Wherefore, although to be the Father and to be the Son is different, yet their substance is not different; because they are so-called, not according to substance, but according to relation, which relation, however, is not an accident,

because it is not changeable (*De Trinit.*, V, 6).

Here it is helpful to be reminded that the Cappadocians discerned Persons (here) mainly by their origin from one source, namely, God the Father, or by the category of causality of being (St. Gregory of Nyssa). On the other hand, Augustine says that

Person is coincident in God and with Being and is the name for all of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. For the case is the same with the word *person* also; for, for God it is not one thing *to be*, and another to be a *person*, but it is absolutely the same thing. For if *to be* is said in respect to Himself, person is then conceived relatively; in this accordingly, we should say three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; just as we would speak of three friends, or three relations, or three neighbors. This is so, in that they are so mutually, not that each one of them is so in respect to himself. Wherefore any one of these is the friend of the other two, or the relation, or the neighbor, because these names have a relative signification. What then? Are we to call the Father the person of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, or the Son the person of the Father and the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit the person of the Father and of the Son? None of these, for the word *person* is not commonly so used; nor is it so used in this Trinity, since when we speak of the person of the Father, do we mean anything else than the *substance* of the Father. Wherefore, as the substance of the Father is the Father Himself, not as He is The Father, but as He is, so also the person of the Father is not anything else than the Father Himself; for He is called a person in respect to Himself, not in respect to the Son or to the Holy Spirit: just as He is called in respect to Himself both God and great, or as to be good, so it is the same thing to Him to be, as to be a person (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11).

And in another place he says:

Why do we not also say three Gods? For certainly, since the Father is a person, and the Son a person, and the Holy Spirit a person, therefore there are three persons: since then the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, why not three Gods? Or else, since on account of their ineffable union these three are together one God, why not also one person; so that we could not say, three persons, although we call each a person singly, just as we cannot say three Gods, also we call each singly God, whether the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit? (*De Trinit.*, VII, 8)

On these, his own perplexities, Augustine gives a rather simple response: "Because we want to retain at least *one word* for the signification by virtue of which the Holy Trinity is being known, lest we were silent to the question asked: what are these Three" (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11). Obviously, this is not a satisfactory response, except perhaps, everything could be justified in such a manner.

Let us draw some conclusions from this concise analysis of Augustine's *trinitarian terminology*.

1. There is no (and cannot be) such generic or special name (notion), which would embrace all three Persons of the Holy Trinity (*De Trinit.*, VII, 7).
2. The notions *essence* and *substance* are common terms for all Persons of the Holy Trinity. However, these are not generic, special notions (*De Trinit.*,

VII, 8).

3. Had these notions been generic, special ones, then it would be possible to say *three Gods* (*De Trinit.*, VII, 8, 11).

4. If *essence* were identical to the notion *genus* or *species*, and *substance* to the notion *individual*, then it would be possible to say that Persons of the Holy Trinity are not one God, but three Gods, and as well, three human individuals are not one man, but three men (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11).

5. One indivisible essence cannot be subdivided in three Substances (*Hypostases*) or Persons (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11).

6. For God *to be* is the same as *to subsist* (hypostatically), and hence, in God *essence* is identical to *substance* (hypostasis), for both are said about God Himself, and not in relation to some one (*De Trinit.*, VII, 9).

7. In the simple essence of God, *essence*, *substance*, *being*, *attributes* and *operations* coincide because God is called *substance* in only an improper sense, since *essence* only is the proper one (*De Trinit.*, VII, 10, VIII, 1).

8. The notion *person* regarding the Holy Trinity, expresses not the *essence*, but *a relation to another*, even if it is eternal and unchangeable (*De Trinit.*, V, 6).

9. However *person* is also the name common to all Persons of the Holy Trinity; it is identical to the notion of *substance* and *being*. However, it is impossible to say about God that he is *one Person*, since then we will be without any notion signifying the Holy Trinity (*De Trinit.*, VII, 8, 11).

As we tried to show, the majority of the conclusions from Augustine's doctrine are in direct contradiction with the doctrine of the Cappadocians. The latter in respect to God on the one hand, clearly distinguished between *common essence*, and on the other, *common attributes* and *operations*. And a third, in particular *Hypostases*, is distinguished indivisibly possessing this *common essence* and all its *attributes* and *operations*.

3.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALOGY

All the results of our terminological findings get confirmed in analogies Augustine used to understand the Holy Trinity. If God is first of all essence, which coincides with hypostasis, persons attributes and operations, then the basis for differences, or hypostatical attributes of Persons of the Holy Trinity should be, from an Augustinian point of view, found in the inner laws of His being and life.¹⁶

Augustine judges that for the purpose of understanding the dogma of the Holy Trinity man should first turn into himself,¹⁷ to his self-consciousness, which bears the image of God (*imago Dei*), as he says, "image, though, unequal, [is] even far more distinct, not co-eternal ...of another essence, though which is more close according to nature to God among all created

things made by Him (*De civ. Dei*, XI, 26).¹⁸ Augustine notes that our consciousness is a unity of three moments:

being (*esse*), intelligence (*nosse, intelligere*) and will (*velle*). He says, "I would that men would reflect upon these three certain things within themselves. Far different are these three from that Trinity, but I indicate where it is men may consider them, weigh them, and perceive how far differently they are. I speak of these three: *to be, to know, and to will*. For I am, and I know, and I will: I am a knowing and a willing being, and I know that I am and that I will, and I will to be and to know. Therefore, in these three, let him who can do so perceive how inseparable a life there is, one life and one mind and one essence, and finally how inseparable a distinction there is, and yet there is a distinction" (*Confess.* XIII, 11).

Transferring these judgements to God as Archetype, and introducing the necessary corrections, Augustine claims that God as absolute Spirit represents also Himself as a tri-unity of the Supreme Being, Intelligence and Will, which in him are absolute, immutable, eternal and are three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (*Confess.* XIII, 12, 19).

"Thine Being is absolute," Augustine says, addressing God. Knowledge is absolute, Will is absolute. Immutable is Thine Being, immutable is Knowledge, immutable is Will. In Thine Being the Knowledge and Will are immutable. In Thee, are Will, immutable Being and Knowledge" (*Confess.*, XIII, 19).

Certainly Augustine was aware of the difficulties of such an account of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. At some point (400 A.D. c.), he wasn't convinced of the soundness of his inferences and said he couldn't decide whether there is a Trinity in God, because of these three acts; or whether these acts are in each Person, so that all three belong to each Person; or whether both hold, so that the Selfsame exists immutably by its great and plenteous unity, in some marvelous way both simple and multiple, with the infinite end in and for itself (*Confess.* XIII, 11).

We should note here that according to the Cappadocian doctrine, these and other divine attributes and potencies belong to the oneness of Persons of the Holy Trinity and correspond to the *essence*, but not the *Hypostases*.¹⁹ Besides, Augustine's point of departure is that humans will find their best expression in love. He also says that "there are such necessary features of the human spirit, which help it to render the image of God, such as *being, intelligence and love*": We exist, and know that we exist, and love this our existence and knowledge" (*De civ. Dei*, XI, 26). And further: "We, humans, are made according to the likeness of our Creator, Whose Eternity is true, Truth is eternal and Love is both eternal and truthful, and He Himself is an eternal, truthful, love-worthy Trinity, unfused and inseparable" (*De civ. Dei*, XI, 28).

Further, human personal existence is preserved first of all by virtue of memory, being able to hold the past and through this provide the warrant to

the self-identity of our "I," so in God His eternal being is identical with memory (this is the God-Father). Therefore the trinitarian scheme of Augustine is as follows: Memory, Intelligence, Will (*De Trinit.* X, 13, 17).

As in our spirit we discern memory, understanding, and will, so we should discern the ineffable unity of the Holy Trinity (*Epistle* 169). These three characters in God as well as in man, belong to the same one substance (= hypostasis)": And hence these three are one, in that they are one life, one mind, one essence; and whatever else they are severally called in respect to themselves, they are called also together, not plurally, but in the singular number (*De Trinit.* X, 18).

In addition, Augustine shows that all of these three characteristics are absolutely necessary and interconnected and are united unconfusedly and inseparably. He says:

But they are three, in that wherein they are mutually referred to each other; and if they were not equal, and this way only each to each, but also each to all.... For I remember that I have memory and understanding, and will, and I understand that I understand, and will, and remember; and I will that I will, and remember, and understand; and I remember together my whole memory, and understanding, and will. For that of my memory which I do not remember, is not in my memory; and nothing is so much in the memory as memory itself. Therefore I remember the whole memory. Also, whatever I understand I know that I understand, and I know that I will whatever I will; but whatever I know I remember. Therefore I remember the whole of my understanding, and the whole of my will. Likewise, when I understand these three things, I understand them together as whole. For there is none of these things intelligible I do not understand, it follows also that I neither remember nor will. And whatever of things intelligible I remember and will, it follows that I understand. My will also embraces my whole understanding and my whole memory whilst I use the whole that I understand and remember. And, therefore, while all are mutually comprehended by each, and each as wholes, and as a whole is equal to each as a whole, and each as a whole at the same time to all as wholes; and these three are one, one life, one mind, one essence" (*De Trinit.*, X, 18).

Taking into account that will has expression in love, (*amor, charitos, dilectio*) Augustine says also that the Holy Trinity is Memory, Intelligence and Charity (*De Trinit.* IX, 3; XIV, 15), or Mind, Knowledge and Charity (*De Trinit.* IX, 3).

Realizing that such display of characters among the Persons of the Holy Trinity makes God something complicated and deprives Persons of the fulness of divinity, that stands in contradiction to his doctrine, Augustine tries to explain why this is so thus:

The Holy Trinity which is one God, is not so to be understood from those three things which have been set forth in the trinity of our mind, as that the Father should be the memory of all three, and the Son the understanding of all three, and the Holy Spirit the love of all three; as though the Father should neither understand nor love for himself, but the Son should understand for Him, and the Holy Spirit love for Him, but He Himself should remember only both for Himself and for them; ...but rather in this way, that both all and each have all three each in his own nature. Nor that these things should differ in them, as in us memory is one

thing, understanding another, love or charity another, but should be some one thing that is equivalent to all, as wisdom itself, and should be so contained in the nature of each, as that He who has it is that which He has, as being an unchangeable and simple substance (*De Trinit.* XV, 28).

If so, then what is the sense at all to drawing such analogies? Isn't it better to relate these characteristics to a common nature, and differences found in something be attributed to another, according to the Cappadocian project? Besides, Augustine pays attention not only to the abilities of man, but also to their realization, and displays three main moments: mind, teaching and use (*ingenium, doctrina, usus*) (*De Trinit.* X, 17); and also three parts of philosophy: science (*scientia*), logic, and ethics (*De Trinit.* XI; *De civ. Dei* XI, 25).

Thus, when Augustine spoke of the coincidence in God of single and common essences (i.e. the first and the second essences of Aristotle, or *hypostasis* and *ousia* according to the Cappadocians), this is completely affirmed in his psychological analogy of the Holy Trinity.

3.2 OTHER ANALOGIES

Besides the psychological analogy (*in interiore homine*, in the human soul) Augustine found a reflection of the Holy Trinity (His *vestiges*, in distinction from *image* in a soul) in external man (*in exterior homine*, i.e. in a body and bodily senses) and even in the entire outward world. In external man (*in exterior homine*) he found vestiges of the Holy Trinity. Augustine sees in the sensual act of perception itself (in his *quae cernuntur extrinsecus*), by which it is possible to discern "body perceived by sight" (*ex corpora quod videtur*), image or "form of a body, which is imprinted in visual ability" (*forma quae inde in acie cernentis imprimatur*), and in the will's stretching, uniting both this and the other (*utrumque copulantis intentione voluntatis*), analogues of the Trinity (*De Trinit.* XI, 2–5). Or, if we pay attention to the inner part of perception, then we find these three moments, *imagination (imagination) of body in memory, information (information) of the soul*, when the intention of knowledge turns to the imagining subject, and, finally, intention of the will (*intentio voluntates*), uniting these both (*De Trinit.*, XI).

Regarding the external world, regarding mind, it is also possible to find the *marks* of the Holy Trinity: the *being* of things directs us toward the Father as the font of all being and as the Supreme Being; a multiplicity of forms and species point toward the Son as a source of all forms and as the Supreme Wisdom, and finally, the order of things in mutual relationships and the harmony seen among them point to the Holy Spirit as a source of all order and love (*De ordine* 7; *De Trinit.*, VI, 12; *De civ. Dei* XI, 28; *De divers. quaest.*

3.3 TABLES OF ANALOGIES

A. General table of analogies of the Holy Trinity according to Augustine

Father	Son	Holy Spirit
A. In God	Himself	(Truth, archetype)
1. Supreme Being	Supreme Wisdom	Supreme Good
2. True eternity	Eternal Truth	Eternal and true Love
3. Eternity	Truth	Will
4. Eternity	Truth	Goodness
5. Eternity	Image (Specie)	Use
6. Father	Image	Gift
7. The beginning of things	Beauty	Love

B. In the creature in general (vestiges of God)

8. Unity	Form	Order
9. Being	Form	Order
10. That due to what things exist	That due to what things are different	That due to what things are in accord (to each other)
11. That due to what things exist	That due to what things are as they are	That due to what things are in harmony.
12. Nature	Teaching	Use

C. In the external man

13. Visible object	External vision (sight)	Intention of soul
14. Memory	Inner vision	Will

D. In the inner man (image of God)

15. To be	To know	To desire ²⁰
16. To be	To think	To live
17. Existence	Knowledge	The love of these both

18. Reason	Knowledge	Love
19. Memory	Thinking	Will
20. Intelligence	Teaching	Use
21. Physics	Logics	Ethics
22. Memory of God	Knowledge of God	Love to God

<p>Texts: 1). <i>De civ Dei</i> XI, 28; 6). Ibid. 7). Ibid. VI, 12 (# 6 and 7 are under the influence of the 2nd <i>Book On Trinity</i>) of Hilarius of Poitiers;</p>	<p>2). Ibid.; 3). <i>On the Holy Trinity</i> IV, 2, 4; 8). Ibid; 9). <i>On the City of God</i> XI, 28; 10). <i>De diver. Quest</i> 18; 11) Ibid.; 12) <i>On the City of God</i> XI, 25; 13) <i>On the Holy Trinity</i> XI, 2;</p>	<p>4). Ibid VI, 11; 5). Ibid. VI, 11; 14). Ibid. 6–9; 15). <i>Confess.</i> XIII, 12; 16) <i>On the Holy Trinity</i> VI, 11; 17). <i>On the City of God</i>, XI, 26; 18) <i>De Trinit.</i>, IX, 3; 19) Ibid. X, 17; 20) Ibid. 21) <i>De civ Dei</i>, XI, 25; 22) <i>De Trinit.</i> XIV, 15.</p>
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3.4 CONCLUSIONS FROM ANALOGIES, PRESENTED BY AUGUSTINE

1) Though Augustine did not distinguish the *essential being* from the *hypostatical one* in God (i.e. *essence* from *hypostasis*), he finds distinctions among the Persons of the Holy Trinity in the sphere of the attributes or abilities of one Divine Essence.

2) As an example of such attributes or abilities Augustine offers the following enumeration: being, thinking, will; being, thinking, love; memory, thinking, will *et al.*²¹

3) These three attributes or abilities are indeed the one essence, one substance, one Reason, one Life; therefore they are of one essence.

4) Such an approach makes the existence in God, three Persons, corresponding to those three attributes or abilities quite necessary and lawful.

5) All Persons of the Holy Trinity are closely bound. Being mutually conditioned, they penetrate each other and are connected inseparably and unconfusedly.

4. THE EQUALITY AND ONE-IN-ESSENCE OF THE PERSONS OF THE HOLY TRINITY

The next conclusion to draw from Augustine's doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the equality and one-in-essence of the three divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, which sharing the one substance (*substantia vel essentia*), are inseparably equal in God's oneness and are not three Gods, but one God (*De Trinit.*, I, 7). There is such an equality in God that not only is the Father not greater than the Son, but neither of the persons of the Trinity is less than the Trinity Himself (*De Trinit.*, VIII, *prooem*). "In these (created) things it is not so much that one man, as three men together. And two men together are more than one man.... But in God it is differently, because the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit together are not in essence more than the Father, or the Son, but together these three Substances or Persons, if They have to be so called, are equal to each single one, and this is unthinkable for the "psychic man" (*De Trinit.*, VII, 11). Hence, it follows that the operation of the Divine Persons is one and inseparable (*De Trinit.*, I, 8; II, 18).

5. THE ISSUE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The principle fallacy both of St. Augustine and his Western predecessors, such as St. Hilarius of Poitiers and St. Ambrose of Mediolane, consists in the transfer to the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit names, which are nothing less than the expressions of His *oiconomia* operation in the world. For example, the name *Gift of God*, referred to in Acts (Acts, 8, 20) and epistles of the apostle Paul, makes it possible for Augustine to say: "The proper name of the Holy Spirit is "the Gift of God" (*Donum Dei*≡*munus* for Hilarius of Poitiers) (*De Trinit.*, VII, 7). The same point is made for the term "love" in the First Epistle of John (1Jn 4, 16). As Gift and Love, the Holy Spirit serves as a *copula* (*copulatio*,—*De fide et symbolo*, IX; *communio*—*De Trinit.* V, 12) between the Father and the Son. There is a sense to analyzing more closely this doctrine of Augustine, which stands in drastic contrast to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit pictured by the Cappadocians.

In the Fifth Book of his book, *On the Holy Trinity* Augustine says:

The Holy Spirit...in a proper sense (*proprie*) being called the Holy Spirit, is thus called *relatively*, since He is referred both to the Father, and to the Son, for the Holy Spirit is *the Spirit of the Father and of the Son*. But the relation is not itself apparent in that name, but it is apparent when He is *named the Gift of God* (Acts 8, 20). Indeed He is the Gift of the Father and of the Son, as the Lord teaches, "He proceeds from the Father" (Jn., 15, 26), and because of that which the apostle says "He who doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (*Rom.* 8, 9; cf. *Gal.* 4, 6), i.e. He means the Holy Spirit Himself. When we say, therefore, *the gift of the giver*, and *the giver of the gift*—we call them mutually in both cases relatively in reciprocal reference. Ergo, the Holy Spirit is a certain ineffable communion of the Father and of the Son

(*quaedam ineffabilis communitio Patris Filii*). Thus on that account, He (the Holy Spirit), probably, is so called, because the same name is suitable to both the Father and the Son. For He Himself is called specially that which they are called in common, because the Father is spirit and the Son is spirit, and the Father is holy and the Son is holy. In order therefore, that the communion of both (*utriusque communio*) may be signified from a name which is suitable to both, the Holy Spirit is called the gift of both (*donum amborum, De Trinit. V, 12*).

On that basis Augustine presupposes that the Holy Spirit *proceeds from both of Them*, and so justifies this in the following way:

If the begetter is a beginning in relation to that which he begets, the Father is a beginning in relation to the Son, because He begets Him; but whether the Father is also a beginning in relation to the Holy Spirit, since it is said: 'He proceeds from the Father,' i.e. no small question. Because, if it is so, He will not only be a beginning to that thing which He begets or makes, but also to that which He gives. And here, too, that question comes to light, it can, which is wont to trouble many, Why the Holy Spirit is not also a son, since He, too, comes forth from the Father, as it is read in the Gospel? For the Spirit came forth, not as born, but as given; and so He is not called a son, because He was neither born, as the Only-begotten, nor made, so that by the grace of God He might be born into adoption, as we are. For that which is born of the Father, is referred to the Father only when called Son, and so the Son is the Son of the Father, and not also our Son; but that which is given is referred both to Him whom He gave; and so the Holy Spirit is not only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son who gave Him, but He is also called ours, who have received Him. If, therefore, that also which is given has him for the beginning by whom it is given, since it has received from no other source that which proceeds from him; it must be admitted that the Father and the Son are a Beginning of the Holy Spirit, not two Beginnings; but as the Father and Son are one God, and one Creator, and one Lord relatively to the creature, so are they one Beginning relatively to the Holy Spirit. But the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one Beginning in respect to the creature, as also one Creator and one God" (*De Trinit. V, 15*).

The Holy Spirit "is eternal gift, which is given in time" (*De Trinit. V, 17*). This doctrine of St. Augustine appeared to be in contradiction to the Cappadoceans on the matter of one source of the Divine Nature, namely, God the Father.²²

I should add, that Augustine says often but with reservation that the Holy Spirit "proceeds par excellence from the Father":

And yet it is not to no purpose that in this Trinity the Son and none other is called *the Word of God*, and the Holy Spirit and none other *the Gift of God*, and God the Father alone is *He from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds*. And therefore I have added the word *principally*, because we find that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son also. But the Father gave Him this too, not as to one already existing, and not yet having it; but whatever He gave to the only-begotten Word, He gave by begetting Him. Therefore He so begat Him, as that the common Gift should proceed from Him also, and the Holy Spirit should be the Spirit of both (*De Trinit. XV, 29, 47*).²³

He adds, "All that the Son has He got it from the Father, then certainly He has of the Father, that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from Him" (*De Trinit. XV, 47*).

Almost in the same manner Augustine proves that the Holy Spirit

proceeds from the Father and the Son, presupposing that allegedly the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures (*1 Jn.* 4, 16; *Rom.* 5, 5) is called *Love* (*amor*, *charitas*, *dilectio*). “If, then, any of the three is to be specially called *Love*, what more fitting than that it should be the Holy Spirit?, namely, that in that simple and highest nature, substance should not be one thing and love another, but that substance itself should be love, and love itself should be substance, whether in the Father, or in the Son, or in the Holy Spirit; and yet that the Holy Spirit should be specially called *Love* (*De Trinit.* XV, 29; 31). Inasmuch as The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, then the Holy Spirit is, according to Augustine, their mutual love (*utriusque amor*, *De civ. Dei* XI, 26; *De fide et symbolo* IX). “And the Holy Spirit, according to the Holy Scriptures, is neither of the Father alone, nor of the Son alone, but of both; and so intimates to us a mutual love, wherewith the Father and the Son reciprocally love one another (*De Trinit.* XV, 27). “The Three are: Loving, Loved and Love” (*Tria sunt: amans, et quod amatur et amor*, *De Trinit.* VIII, 10).²⁴ For Augustine this means that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both of Them.

Augustine, continuing to confuse the theological and economical aspects, draws for support one more *argument*, the condescension of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles after the Resurrection (*Jn.* 20, 22): “That (the Holy Spirit) proceeds from both of Them we learn from the fact that the Son Himself, on one hand, says “ (*Which*) *from the Father proceeds*” (*Jn.* 15, 26), and on the other, when He, after the Resurrection, having appeared to His disciples, blew and spoke: “*Receive the Holy Spirit*” (*Jn.* 20, 22), and so He says this to show that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from Himself” (*De Trinit.* XV, 45). In the same manner Augustine understands the descent of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord promised to send down on the Day of Pentecost: “How is it possible for him not to be God who sent down the Holy Spirit?” Augustine raises the question even though he understands that the Apostles also transmitted the Holy Spirit to believers through the laying on of hands (*De Trinit.* XV, 46). It is noteworthy that both are cases that deal with the salvific operation of the Holy Spirit (we should also note that it is clear from the above, that Augustine fails to distinguish between operations and essence in God), and secondly, he presupposed that the Lord is the channel of Grace for mankind through the God–man and not so much through God alone.

Finally, Augustine tries to justify his claims about the Holy Spirit and His place in the Holy Trinity by virtue of psychological analogies of the Trinity. He notes that the will (or love) in man is engendered in the depth of his spirit, or memory, and provides the necessary connection between memory and thinking. In an analogous way, the Holy Spirit, though originating *par excellence* from the Father, at the same moment proceeds also from the Son (*De Trinit.* XV, 47). He says, “The will proceeds from the human mind first, in order that that may be sought which, when found, may be called offspring;

which offspring being already brought forth or born, that will is made perfect, resting in this end, so that what had been its desire when seeking, is its love when enjoying; which love now proceeds from both, i.e. from the mind that, begets, and from the notion that is begotten, as if from parent and offspring?" (*De Trinit.* XV, 47). This very thought is supported by Augustine through an analogy drawn of an act of sense perception and imagination, where will plays the coupling part (copulation, conjunction, *communio*) between object and the subject of knowledge (look further under the heading: *Other analogies*).

6. CONCLUSIONS FROM AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1). In his doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Augustine transfers to the personal, hypostatical being of the Holy Spirit *oikonomia* notions of His operations in the world, (he confuses theology (eternity) and *oikonomia*), supposing that some, found in the Holy Scriptures, (names, such as: *gift, love et al.*) express His inner divine Being.

2). In his psychological analogy, the Holy Spirit correlates with such divine attributes or powers as Gift, Love, Will, and Goodness.

3). The Holy Spirit as Gift, Love, and Will par excellence proceeds from the Father and also proceeds from the Son, i.e. from both of Them, and serves as their connective principle.

7. GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE OF AUGUSTINE

We tried to show that the trinitarian doctrine of Augustine stands in drastic contrast to both the Cappadocian triadology and other Orthodox Fathers. It possesses a number of benefits, but still there are more defects. Its benefit is that it justifies (but it costs dearly):

1) a strict unity in God, and the one-in-essence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity;

2) the necessary inner reciprocity of the life of the proper Three Divine Persons;

3) the close interconnection and interpenetration of the Persons.

The defects of the given doctrine are:

1) "*existentiality*," i.e. the Persons of the Holy Trinity are secondary and derivative in respect to the Divine Essence.

2) there is an inadmissible confusion attaching to his notion of *essence* (general) and *hypostasis* (species, singleness), i.e. the essential being and

hypostatical (Substantial) one;

3) the reduction of differences among the Persons of the Holy Trinity to the category of relation (*relativum, ad liquid*);

4) the identification of *Hypostases* with Divine *attributes* or *abilities* (being, intelligence, will; being, intelligence, love; memory, intelligence, will *et al.*), which indeed should be referred to God's nature (essence);

5) the absense of a justification of the substantiality (*hypostacity*) of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, the substantial personal being of which is not the implicit inner requisite of the doctrine of Augustine, but merely his deliberate preconception;

6) his diminishing of the being and dignity of the Hypostasis of the Holy Spirit in comparison to the First and the Second Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, the Father, and the Son, Which at the same moment are the source and origin (*principium*) of the Holy Spirit; the introduction of two principles in God;

7) a confusion regarding his theology and *oikonomia* in the Holy Spirit;

8) his identification of the image of God (i.e. Divine essence, or nature) in man with the image of the Holy Trinity, which should be sought not in a single man, but in the totality of the human hypostasis (individuals), sharing the same common nature.

In this connection I think that the trinitarian doctrine both of Augustine and his Western followers could be characterized as *sui generis modalism*, or at least, as a *functionalism*, and it should be defined as a vestige of pre-Nicean triadology. The doctrine of the Cappadocians was deliberately attacked by Augustine first of all from philosophical prerequisites and subjective considerations. His arguments were not grounded in the Holy Tradition interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

8. THE DESTINY OF AUGUSTINE'S TRIADOLGY

Unfortunately Augustine's doctrine became so popular in the West through the centuries that it very soon substituted all the other accounts of the Holy Fathers in the field. It was completely accepted by the predominant majority of the Latin Fathers such as: Boethius, Fulgentius of Ruspe, Anselm of Canterbury, Abelard, Albert the Great, Thomas of Aquinas, Bonaventura *et al.*

Moreover, in the Middle Ages in the West the councils convened and condemned not only the Orthodox doctrine of the proceeding of the Holy Spirit, but the Cappadocian triadology in general as well (look, for instance, at the condemnation of Gilbert de La Porree in the XIIth cen.).

Inasmuch as the trinitarian doctrine of Augustine stands in clear opposition to the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the foundation of the

latter was developed by the Cappadocians Fathers, and for this reason, it certainly didn't meet with a positive response in the East. Something similar to the doctrine of Augustine can be found rather rarely in the writings of some Orthodox fathers, and oftentimes it was connected more with the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy, than directly with Augustine. Thus, for example, St. Maximus the Confessor in his work *Questions to Thalassios*, in the 13th question reproduces one of Augustine's formulas: "As coming out from the being, we believe that is, what is truly the Being God (i.e. the Father) and if so, comes from the essential distinction of the species of beings, thereby we learn something concerning his innate essence Wisdom (i.e. the Son), lying at the basis of beings and comprising them. And again, coming out from the essential movement of the species of beings, we learn of His innate essence in Life (i.e. the Holy Spirit), lying too at the basis of beings and fulfilling them. Thus on the ground of an intelligent contemplation of creation we search the dogma of the Holy Trinity, i.e. of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."²⁵

NOTES

¹ Please note that the translator of this article, used the Roman Catholic translation of *De Trinitate* of Augustine, and the Russian author used the Russian version, hence there may be pagination variances.)

² It should be noted that the trinitarian doctrine of Augustine was formed under the influence of another Latin of the Fourth Century, Marius Victorinus. Look at my article in *Alfa and Omega*, #23.

³ This is what we find in the *Categories*.

⁴ Here, we might include the notion of *physis* (nature).

⁵ Basil, *Magn. Ep.* 214: *Ei de dei...*

⁶ Basil, *Magn. Ep.* 189 (Gr. Nyss.): *ean de mian....*

⁷ This formula can also be found in Origen.

⁸ It is right for Tertullian.

⁹ Probably it was under the influence of the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One. Plotinus himself considered that the categories are applicable but only to the material world, not to the intelligible one, and absolutely refuted them when it came to the One. In the *Nous* part of these categories (*essence, quality, quantity*) and as well, *life* and *wisdom* coincide with one another. See the *Sophist*.

¹⁰ Among the Western theologians, one can find such doctrine such as in Marius Victorinus: “for the eternal beings to be (*esse*) is identical with to live (*vivere*) and to think (*intelligere*, *Adv. Arium*, IV, 25). Victorinus himself refers to Plato’s dialogue, the *Sophist*. In his *Confessions* (IV, 29), Augustine says that earlier he applied the ten categories to God, though later he dropped them. “I thought that whatever existed had to be included under these ten predicaments. In this way, I attempted to understand even yourself, my God, who are most wonderfully simple and incommunicable, as if you were subject to your greatness and beauty in such wise that they would be in you as in a subject, just as they are in bodies. But you yourself are your greatness and your beauty. On the other hand, a body is not great or beautiful in so far as it is a body, for even if it were smaller and less beautiful, it would yet remain a body.” It is a special theme, connected with the doctrine of ideas, where the essence coincides with an attribute, single one (*substantia*) with general (essential Lk. *De Trinit.* V, 11). We suppose that Augustine wants by this to express that essentially true thought that God possesses attributes by nature (essence), but not through communication, as a creature (the same manner as Plato’s idea that what it is, a thing is through communication with idea. However, the form which Augustine used for this is, in my mind, false, for it completely eliminates the boundary between the incomprehensible, unsearchable essence of God and His communicable energies. It is worthy to note that Augustine himself uses ten categories when he says that not everything we speak about God refers to his essence (*substantia, secundum substantiam*), but also refers to relation (*ad liquid*) (*De Trinit.* V, 6). Besides, Augustine says that other categories are applicable to God, such as *situation, time, space, et. al.*, not in the proper sense (non propre) but figuratively (translate) or analogically (*per similitudines*)(*De Trin.*, V, 9). The same idea is found in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, VII, 10, X, 13. Note that such doctrine is opposed to one of the Cappadocian Fathers, who widely used the Aristotelian categories in his trinitarian doctrine. However, Augustine defends his position with great energy and persistence in the majority of his dogmatical works (*On Faith and Free Will*, IX, the *Confessions*, IV, 29, *On Some Dogmatical Questions*, *On the Holy Trinity*, V, 6, VI, 6, VII, 2, 10, *The City of God*, XI, 10, *et. al.*). He even suggests that those not able to understand him should still purify their hearts (LK. *De fide et symbolo*, IX). However, it is this doctrine that constitutes the main difference between Western and Eastern theology. But the differences arise not only with trinitarian questions (10, Basil *Magn.*, Ep. 234).

¹¹ Basil *Magn.*, Ep. 2:3, 4: “But God, he says, is simple, and whatever attribute you have reckoned as knowable is of His essence. But the absurdities involved in this sophism are

innumerable. When all these high attributes have been enumerated, are they all names of one essence? And is there the same mutual force in His awfulness and His loving-kindness, His justice and His creative power, His providence and His foreknowledge, His bestowal of rewards and punishments, and His majesty? In mentioning any one of these do we declare His essence? If they say yes, let them not ask if we know the essence of God, but let them inquire of us whether we know God to be awful, or just, or merciful. These we confess that we know. If they say that essence is something distinct, let them not put us in the wrong on the score of simplicity. For they confess themselves that there is a distinction between the essence and each one of the attributes enumerated. The operations are various, and the essence simple, but we say that we know our God from His operations, but do not undertake to come near essence. His operations come down to us, but His essence remains beyond our reach.

¹² Basil *Magn.* Ep 2:3,6: "Those who identify essence or substance and hypostasis are compelled to confess only three Persons, and, in their hesitation to speak of three hypostasis, are convinced of failure to avoid the error of Sabellius, for even Sabellius himself, who in many places confuses the conception, yet, by asserting that the same hypostasis changed its form to meet the needs of the moment, does endeavor to distinguish persons."

¹³ There is an answer offered by St. Gregory of Nyssa to Bishop Ablabius, who asked him a similar question. Gregory pointed out first, that men too could not be called in a proper sense, as many men, but one man, and second, that the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity is not divided by time, nor place, nor position, nor thoughts, nor operations, nor will, but they abide in one another and have the sameness in everything, besides hypostasis, attributes, which are expressions of causality and their origin: "Unbegotten-ness, begotten-ness, procession or being without cause, being from direct cause, being through that which had cause."

¹⁴ It is noteworthy that sometimes Augustine himself recognizes that he doesn't know what the difference lies between essence and *hypostasis* according to the Greek Fathers: "And they (Greeks) say: *Hypostasis*, but I don't know how, according to their opinion, this is different from *essence*, Dicunt quidem et illi hypostasis; sed nescio quid volant interesse inter usiam et hypostasis, *De Trinit.*, V, 10).

¹⁵ Compare Gregory of Niziance, *Orat.* 29.

¹⁶ It is not frequently that Augustine mentions traditional hypostatical attributes, such as: *inbegotten, begotten, proceeding (ingenious, genius, procedens, De Trinit.*, V, 4, 8, 15; XV, 47; *De fide et symbolo*, IX). Comp. with Greg. Nza. *Orat.*, 29.).

¹⁷ Before Augustine, it was his predecessor, Marius Victorinus, who in order to understand the mystery of God's Tri-unity (Archetype), turned also to an analysis of human individual consciousness as reflecting in itself the image of God: "[Human] soul (*anima*), he says, being the incorporeal substance, possesses the definition and likeness,—vital power (*vitalem potentiam*), and intelligence, i.e., she has two powers (*bipotens*). For it is life-giving, endowing the power to every living creature, and has intelligence, though darkened, but of the same essence; and thus, all these powers are of the same essence with one another. There is one being (*unum*, on) though possessing with double power in a single movement, life and thinking. *Adv.*, *Ar.*, 1, 22)." Our soul possesses being, life and thinking, therefore the soul is the image of the Most High Trinity" (superiors Triados anima est ut imago imagines), *Adv. Ar.* 1, 63). We can find these traits as well in Augustine, but not so often as others: omnes tamen se intelligere nonertunt, et esse et vivere, sed intelligere ad id quod intelligent referrunt, esse autem et vivere ad se ipsas. Et nulli est dubium, nec quemquam intelligere qui non vivat, nec quemquam vivere qui non sit. Ergo consequenter et esse et vivere id quod intelligit, non sicut est cadaver quod non vivit, nec sicuti vivat anima qua non intelligit, sed proprio quondam eodemque praestantiore modo. Itemvulle se sciunt, neque hoc posse quemquam qui non sit et qui non vivat, pariter sciunt: itemque ipsa voluntatem referent ad liquid, quod ea voluntate volant (*De Trinit.*X, 13; also *De libero arbitrio*, lib. 2, cap. 3).

¹⁸ Generally speaking, such discourse was known in the East before Augustine. Moreover, the psychological analogy was among the most favorable both in the West and in the East,

especially among pre-Nicean theologians. It is found even in St. Athanasius and the Cappadocians, but the latter use it very little in comparison to the other anthropological analogies, where there is one human nature and a plurality of human *hypostasis*, possessing a given nature. Comp. Basil *Magn.* Ep. 38.

¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa includes *subsistence, free will, power and goodness* in *Hypostasis*, (*Orat. Cat. Cap.* 1–4).

²⁰ Augustine does not consider these three attributes as simple, but rather as truth about God. See the *Confess.* XIII.

²¹ It is worth noting that in God, the distinction of any attributes or abilities contradicts the claim of Augustine himself regarding their complete identity with the Divine essence (see above). Besides, there is a question that remains: Why did Augustine hypostitize only these three attributes, while at the same time fail to see these three attributes as separate Divine Persons (as for instance, all-mighty-ness, goodness, justice, eternity)? He partly answers this question when he reduces the secondary attributes to the primal ones, but this move is nonetheless not a real answer.

²² In an earlier period (c. 393 A.D.), in his treatise, *Defide et Symbolo*, cap. IX, Augustine recognized that God the Father was the only source of the Godhead.

²³ Sometimes, Augustine speaks about the proceeding of the Holy Spirit from the Father only. Cf. *De Trinit.* IV, 20, XV, 17, *Enchir.* 9, 38).

²⁴ In that notion Augustine has succeeded, maybe, to express most clearly the idea of the *hypostasity* of the first two persons of the Holy Trinity, but at the expense of *de-hypostasizing* the Third Person. Besides, it is appropriate to mention here that according to the Cappadocian doctrine, love is the common attribute, or operation, of all *Hypostases* of the Holy Trinity, relating to Nature, not to *Hypostases*.

²⁵ Translation of A. J. Sidorov (the editor made some changes). See *Orat. Domin. Expositio*; *Cap. De charitate* II, 29; *Cap. Theol.* III; *Ambigua* PG 91, 1133cd; 1260d, etc.

WORD AND TRINITY

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Much of the Latin medieval development of the doctrine of the Trinity occurred in the context of a particular set of philosophical theories about the nature and operations of the human mind. In this paper, I use Aquinas as my example of a medieval theologian because his psychology is especially representative of the Latin medieval theories connected to the doctrine of the Trinity. When we see his interpretation of the doctrine of the second person of the Trinity in the context of his philosophical psychology, the philosophical theory illuminates the theological doctrine as Aquinas understands it. The divine Word which becomes incarnate is to God what an inner word is to a human being: united to the knower, but distinct from him, the means by which the intellect of the knower cognizes extramental objects, and, finally, an object of understanding in its own right, when the intellect reflects on itself. Aquinas's account of the inner word in human cognition is thus a model for him of the divine inner Word which is the second person of the Trinity.

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the Trinity received developments in the Latin middle ages that have been influential in theology ever since. Some of that Latin medieval development, however, occurred in the context of a particular set of philosophical theories about the nature and operations of the human mind.¹ Medieval psychology often looks bizarre to us in its complexity and technicalities. But, in fact, if we understand them properly, some medieval theories of the mind's operations turn out to be surprisingly insightful and accurate when measured by the standards of contemporary neurobiology. The Latin medieval development of the doctrine of the Trinity is therefore illuminated by a proper interpretation of medieval psychology. Whether the doctrine of the Trinity in its Latin medieval guise strikes us as something to

defend or something to reject, our attitude toward it will be more reasonable if we understand it in its historical context.

In this paper, I will use Aquinas as my example of a medieval theologian because his psychology is especially representative of the Latin medieval theories connected to the doctrine of the Trinity.² Aquinas uses his understanding of the nature of what he calls an 'inner word' and its role in human cognition to explain many of the things he takes to be implied by the doctrine of the second person of the Trinity as the Word. Aquinas says, "We can speak about the word of our intellect in accordance with its likeness to the divine Word. A word of our intellect is the terminus of an operation of our intellect...."³ Like the word in a human intellect, the divine Word of God is an inner word, not an outer, spoken or written word, according to Aquinas; and, so understood, it is God's concept of himself. In knowing himself, however, God knows everything else, and so when God knows the divine Word, he thereby also knows everything in creation. Finally, according to the Aristotelian tradition defended by Aquinas, the concept of a thing which is understood is one with the person who understands it. Consequently, the Word is also one with God himself. What is incarnated and becomes the savior of the world is, in Aquinas's view, this divine Word.

All of these theological claims, which seem hard to make sense of, have their source in Aquinas's theory of human cognition and the way in which the human mind operates, so that, whether we want to adopt or dispute Aquinas's theological claims, they cannot be understood properly apart from a grasp of Aquinas's philosophical psychology. In what follows, I will first examine Aquinas's notion of an inner word as regards human intellection, and then I will turn to his account of the way in which things are known by means of an inner word. I will also briefly consider Aquinas's view that the thing known and the knower are assimilated in the act of cognition. I will conclude by sketching the way in which these views give shape to Aquinas's understanding of the second person of the Trinity as the Word of God.

INTELLIGIBLE SPECIES AND INNER WORD

For Aquinas, the actions of a human intellect begin with what he calls intelligible species. These are forms or similitudes⁴ of what is known; in the case of knowledge of material objects, intelligible species are the intellect's versions of the forms which give those extramental things their nature or quiddity.⁵ Just as each sense has its own proper object, so the intellect also has an object proper to it, namely, the natures or quiddities of things.⁶ For Aquinas, natures don't exist in the world on their own; in the world they exist only as incorporated into created things.⁷ Nonetheless, the intellect separates

the quiddity from the other features of a thing, and the resultant form in the intellect is the intelligible species, which is the proper object of the intellect.

To say that the intelligible species is the proper object of the intellect is, however, not to say that this form or similitude is itself what is known. Colored light is the proper object of the power of sight. The light falling on the retina, however, is not what is seen but rather the means by which a person sees the object reflecting that light. In the same way, the intelligible species is not itself what the intellect knows primarily. Like the light falling on the retina, the intelligible species is the means by which the intellectual cognition of extramental reality occurs.⁸ Furthermore, the intellect's grasp of intelligible species is necessary but not sufficient for intellectual cognition of things. When the intellect has apprehended the intelligible species of a thing presented to it, we are at the beginning of the first operation of the intellect, but it isn't yet completed.

The next part of the process depends on the intellect's turning the intelligible species into what Aquinas calls 'an intellected intention,' 'a concept,' or—most importantly for our purposes—'an inner word.' Aquinas says:

"the intellect, informed (*formatus*) by the [intelligible] species of a thing, forms in itself by an act of intellect a certain intention of the thing intellected ... Since this intellected intention is, as it were, the terminus of an operation of the intellect (*intelligibilis*), it is different from the intelligible species that actualizes the intellect. The intelligible species must be considered [just] as the beginning (*principium*) of an operation of the intellect."⁹

Aquinas explains what he means by 'intellected intention' and 'inner word' in this way: "By 'intellected intention' I mean that which the intellect conceives in itself with regard to the thing understood. In us...this is a certain similitude conceived in the intellect with regard to the thing understood. It is what is signified by external words. Hence, this intention is also called an 'inner word'....And that this intention is not in us the thing understood is manifest from the fact that intellectually cognizing a thing is different from intellectually cognizing the intellected intention [or inner word], which the intellect does when it reflects on its own work."¹⁰

An intellected intention or inner word is thus a mental concept arising from the intellect's grasp of the quiddity of a thing.

This inner word enables the intellect to know extramental objects, in Aquinas's view:

Because the intelligible species, which is a form of the intellect and the source for intellection, is a similitude of an external thing, it follows that the intellect forms an intention similar to that [extramental] thing.... And from the fact that the intellected intention [or inner word] is similar to an [extramental] thing, it follows that the intellect intellectually cognizes that thing by forming this sort of intention.¹¹

This brief sketch of Aquinas's account of the first act of intellect looks, of course, utterly alien from anything we find interesting or worth reflecting on in theories of cognition today. In my view, however, the sense that we are here confronting something best suited to the trash heap of history is a mistake, stemming from a failure to understand the ideas underlying the strange terminology Aquinas uses. But before I can give some reasons for thinking so, I need to present one more piece of Aquinas's psychology.

UNIVERSALS AND AGNOSIA

As I said just before, the primary object of a human intellect is the quiddity of a thing that is known.¹² Now, in fact, according to Aquinas, the human intellect does know material particulars; it doesn't just grasp quiddities: "just as we could not sense the difference between sweet and white unless there were one common sensory power that had cognition of both, so also we could not cognize the relation of universal to particular unless there were one power that cognized them both."¹³ But, he goes on to say, the intellect cognizes material particulars by means of quiddities or universals.

As Aquinas sees it, then, the intellective part of the process a person undergoes when he, for example, has cognition of a cat in front of him works like this. The intellect grasps the intelligible species of the cat from the information presented to it by the senses. Then the intellect engages in a further act, transforming the intelligible species into an inner word, for example, the inner word or concept which is signified by the spoken word 'cat.' This is a universal, the nature or quiddity of a cat. At this point, and only at this point, the first act of intellective cognition is complete. Without this act of intellect, whatever contribution the senses make to cognition isn't enough for a human knower to have cognition of a material object *as a cat*.

It is clear from the texts I have cited that Aquinas thinks a concept or inner word—an apprehended quiddity—is the *means* by which a human being knows and that *what* is known is something in extramental reality. And yet, readers of Aquinas sometimes think he is not entitled to this claim. If what the intellect grasps is a quiddity, then it looks as if, on Aquinas's account, the intellect knows a universal, not an extramental thing such as a cat. This objection to Aquinas, however, is mistaken. Aquinas thinks that the intellect's grasp of a material object's quiddity is a necessary means to intellective cognition of that object; and on this score he turns out to be exactly, surprisingly right. A human being cannot know a material particular except by means of a universal which is the quiddity of that particular.

That this is so can be seen most easily from recent work in neurobiology. As a result of neurological deficits brought about by injury or disease, certain patients manifest different varieties of a defect called 'agnosia.' A patient who

has a visual agnosia, for example, has no defects in the visual system itself but functions in many respects like a blind person, because he does not know *what* he sees. As Aquinas would say, such a patient lacks the ability to grasp the quiddity of what is presented to him. For example, a patient suffering from visual agnosia was shown a glove by his doctor, who asked him, "What is this?." "A continuous surface with five outpouchings," the patient promptly replied. When the doctor pressed him and asked again, "Yes, but *what* is it?," the patient had no idea and could only guess.¹⁴ If we ask such a patient who has a glove before him if he sees a glove, he will not answer 'yes'; and if we ask him where the glove is, he will not know, even though he is looking at it.

Although the patient's visual system is perfectly functional, he cannot perceive the material thing presented to his sight precisely because he can't get the quiddity of what he sees. A visually agnostic person therefore is severely impaired in cognizing material objects just because he can't apprehend the quiddity of the objects presented to his vision.

Aquinas puts his point about the cognition of material particulars by means of a grasp of universals this way:

The expression 'cognizing something universally' is used in two ways. In one way, as regards the thing cognized, as [when] one cognizes only the universal nature of a thing. And in this way cognizing something universally is cognizing it...imperfectly, for a person who knew of a human being only that he is animal would cognize him imperfectly. In the other way, [however,] as regards the means of cognizing. And in this way, cognizing something universally is cognizing it more perfectly, for the intellect that can cognize individuals in their own right through one universal means is more perfect than an intellect that cannot do so.¹⁵

So when Aquinas maintains that the intellect of a human knower grasps the quiddity of something or apprehends a nature, he does not mean that *what* the human knower cognizes is a universal, as if human beings knew only common natures and not individual things themselves. The doctor of the agnosia patient can grasp the quiddity of the glove he shows to his patient; but when he does so, he has the glove, not the quiddity of the glove or the universal *glove*, as the *object* of his cognition. Rather, as Aquinas holds, the doctor has cognition of this embodied particular *by means of* the universal. Because the doctor's intellect can grasp the quiddity of the glove presented to him, as his patient's intellect cannot, the doctor, but not the patient, can perceive the glove. That is why, in a recent neurobiology text, agnosia is described as "the inability to perceive objects through otherwise normally functioning sensory channels."¹⁶ So on Aquinas's view, a human knower cognizes an extramental object in virtue of sensory contact *and* the intellect's having grasped the quiddity of that object. The perception of material objects requires apprehending quiddities or universals in this way, as the case of agnosia patients makes clear.

Aquinas also thinks that more powerful intellects are able to cognize singulars in virtue of fewer, higher universals. A little boy may be able to cognize his mother's disposable coffee cup in virtue of being able to apply the universal *cup* to it. But (other things being equal) the chemist who knows the nature of styrofoam, and the physicist who understands the basic constituents of matter, are equipped to have deeper and more powerful cognition of the same object. They, too, cognize by means of the universal *cup*, but that universal is subsumed under other universals, which are themselves subsumed under other universals, and so on until we come to the highest (relevant) universal available to the cognizer in question—perhaps, in the case of the physicist, the nature of matter itself. This feature of cognition seems to be what Aquinas has in mind in holding that more powerful intellects know by means of fewer universals than less powerful intellects do:

there are some [human beings] who cannot grasp an intelligible truth unless it is laid out for them in particulars, individual case by individual case. And this, of course, is a result of the weakness of their intellects. But there are others, whose intellects are more robust, who can grasp many things on the basis of a few.¹⁷

COGNITION AS ASSIMILATION

The last piece of Aquinas's psychology I want to consider here is Aquinas's frequently repeated, frequently cited claim that "all cognition arises from the assimilation of the cognizer to the thing cognized,"¹⁸ that "the intellect actualized *is* the thing actually understood," so that "the soul is all things."¹⁹ This view of Aquinas's is sometimes interpreted as the theory that in cognition the knower becomes identical to the thing known.²⁰ But that way of describing Aquinas's view is seriously misleading.

Aquinas thinks cognition is a function of assimilation because, as I said just before, he thinks that there is a form or similitude of the thing cognized in the cognizer. The cognizer *is* the thing he knows only in the sense that the knower and the object known share a form. Now forms can be shared in a variety of ways. In the case of cognition, the sort of sharing at issue doesn't yield the symmetrical relationship that is suggested by talk of unity between cognizer and cognized; rather, it is, sensibly enough, an asymmetrical relationship in which the form of the thing cognized is in the cognizer, but it isn't the case that the form of the cognizer is in the thing cognized. In addition, the way in which the form of the thing cognized is in the cognizer is very far from making the cognizer *be* the thing cognized in any literal sense at all.²¹ The form in the thing cognized makes that thing what it is—a cat, say. But when the form which is in the cat is received into the person cognizing the cat, it is received as a concept or inner word. When a form inheres in this

way, when it is received as a concept or inner word, Aquinas says that the form is received with ‘spiritual’ or ‘intentional’ reception. When a form is received in this way, the form of the object known is preserved but it inheres in a different mode. The difference of mode is precisely the reason why the cognizer does not literally turn into a cat when cognizing one.

Although Aquinas’s terminology here is alien to us, the phenomenon he wants to call attention to is not. Consider, for example, a street map. A map is effective in the use for which it was designed precisely because it is an instance of the spiritual reception of the form of material objects. The form or configurational state of the city’s streets is transferred to the paper of the map, but it is transferred in such a way that the paper which receives that form isn’t configured by it in the way that the matter of the streets is. Because the form or configurational state of the streets is successfully transferred to the paper of the map, the map enables its user to find her way around the city’s streets. But because the configurational state is received “spiritually” in the paper, the map can be carried around. If the form of the city streets were received in matter of the map’s paper in the way it is received in the streets themselves, then (per impossibile) the reception of the form would make the map’s paper into the city streets. In that case, we would have a reproduction of the city’s streets, but we wouldn’t have a map. So, although a map is itself material, it seems to be a good example of the spiritual or immaterial reception of a form, and so does anything else in which a form or configurational state is preserved in what we ourselves would describe as an encoding.

So the intellect is all things in the sense that it can receive the forms of all things in a suitably encoded mode. Precisely because the intellect receives forms in an intentional or encoded fashion, the reception of those forms produces cognition in the intellect. What is required for cognition is some sort of representation. The original “presentation” of the form of a cat in matter produces a cat; the *re*-presentation of that form, as a concept or inner word in the intellect, produces cognition of the cat.

DIVINE COGNITION AND THE DIVINE INNER WORD

We are now in a position to consider what Aquinas says about the divine inner Word and the role of that Word in God’s knowledge of himself and other things.

For Aquinas, all cognition requires an assimilation between the cognizer and what is cognized,²² and for there to be such an assimilation there must be in the cognizer a form or similitude of the thing being cognized. Aquinas says: “everything that is intellectually cognized is cognized by means of some similitude of it in the person intellectually cognizing”;²³ and “cognizers are distinguished from non-cognizers in this respect, that non-cognizers have

only their own form, but a cognizer is naturally suited to have the form of something else as well, for the form (*species*) of what is cognized is in the cognizer."²⁴

This is true of God as well, on Aquinas's view. Just as human cognition occurs by means of an intelligible form which is an inner word, so God's knowledge does also.

In the case of human beings the forms necessary for cognition are acquired from extra-mental reality. The form of a cat is caused in a person who has cognition of the cat by the cat itself, present before him and causally affecting his senses. But the situation is otherwise in the case of God, on Aquinas's view. In God's case, the requisite form is *not* drawn from the thing cognized when the object of God's cognition is something other than God himself. Instead, God cognizes creatures in virtue of cognizing himself.²⁵ God has cognition of all things by means of just one intelligible form or inner word, which is the concept of his own nature.²⁶

This is a part of Aquinas's theology which has seemed to some readers to be repellent, because they take it to imply that God has no direct knowledge of his creatures. But this view is mistaken, as we saw in our consideration of Aquinas's psychology. Unless the human intellect is reflecting on its own operations, what a human being knows is not the inner word itself, but something extramental presented to that knower, which the human knower knows by means of an inner word. Like human knowers, God knows created things themselves directly, according to Aquinas; but, again like human knowers, God knows things by means of a concept or inner word—in God's case, the divine inner Word.

Furthermore, although there are many inner words by means of which human knowers know other things, there is just one inner word by which God knows, and it is perfectly universal. As we saw, Aquinas thinks that the greater the intellect, the more universal are the forms by which it cognizes and the fewer intelligible forms it requires. Therefore, for God, whose intellect is the greatest possible, there is just one, perfectly universal intelligible form,²⁷ the single divine inner Word.

Because Aquinas thinks of God as subsistent being, the concept of God's nature is for Aquinas the most universal form, under which everything else can be cognized. The grandest unified theory of everything would explain all creation not in terms of elementary particles and forces but in terms of their participation in subsistent being. So to cognize created things by means of the concept of God's nature is to cognize them as deeply and understand them as fully as possible.²⁸ Nothing in this line entails that *what* God knows is only a universal, or that he knows only common natures and not particulars, any more than the physicist's richer understanding of matter entails that he can't know ordinary material objects like gloves and cups. Aquinas's idea is that the single inner Word in God is the *means* by which God cognizes, just as the

much more limited human intellect cognizes by means of the many universals it has when the intellect takes the intelligible forms it apprehends and turns them into inner words or concepts of things outside the mind.

So the claim that the only intelligible form for God is the concept of his own nature does not entail that God can't cognize individuals. The unique inner Word is *the means by which* God cognizes individuals.²⁹ As the human intellect cognizes a corporeal individual such as a glove by means of the concept or inner word *glove*, so God's inner word is the means by which God cognizes all created singulars.³⁰ There is, however, this relevant difference between the human intellect and the divine mind. Except for those occasions on which a human intellect reflects on its own operations and thinks about them, intelligible forms or inner words are only the means by which a human intellect cognizes and not *what* it cognizes. But God not only cognizes by means of the concept of his nature, he also cognizes his nature itself, since he always knows both himself and other things. And that's why Aquinas says that by means of the divine inner Word, "God cognizes himself and other things in one [act of] cognition."³¹ For these reasons, the divine inner Word is God's concept of himself and of every created thing as well.

Finally, as we saw, on Aquinas's views of the nature of cognition, the knower and the object known are assimilated in the process of cognition. The inner word is part of the knower, informing the knower's intellect. On the other hand, as I explained, it is not right to say, as some scholars do, that for Aquinas the knower and the object known become identical. They remain distinct, as a careful consideration of Aquinas's psychology makes clear. In this respect, too, then, Aquinas's account of an inner word in human cognition is a model for his views of the divine inner Word. The divine inner Word is indistinguishable from God and yet distinct from the first person of the Trinity.

(I don't mean to say, of course, that the paradoxical claims of the doctrine of the Trinity cease to be perplexing when we see them in the context of Aquinas's psychology. That would clearly be absurd. My point is only that there is a sense in which some of those paradoxical claims have an interesting analogue in the much less puzzling claims that Aquinas makes about the inner word in human cognition. To that very limited extent, the account of human cognition gives some small insight into the nature of the divine Word.)

For Aquinas, it is the divine inner Word which takes on flesh and becomes the savior of the world. Aquinas's analogy between the divine Word and the inner word of a human intellect provides a way of understanding many of the things Latin medieval theologians believed about the second person of the Trinity, in his divine nature and in the Incarnation. It is in this sense, as divine inner Word, for example, that Christ both was in the beginning with God and was God. Aquinas's model of the inner word also provides an explanation of the claim that the incarnate Christ reveals God to

human beings. An inner word, when it is given an outward expression as a spoken or written word, reveals the mind of the speaker to others. Because the divine inner Word is God's concept of himself, when that inner Word is given outward expression in flesh, it reveals not just something in the mind of God, but God's own nature. I am, of course, just scratching the surface here. To explain adequately all the consequences of Aquinas's modeling the incarnate Word on the inner word of a human intellect would take another paper at least as long as this one.

CONCLUSION

Aquinas's theory of the divine Word is a development of a theological doctrine in the context of a philosophical theory about a scientific matter, the manner in which the human mind works. I think that Aquinas's philosophical theory of the operations of the mind is scientifically sound, although in the very brief exposition of his views here I could only suggest some reasons for thinking so. When we see his interpretation of the doctrine of the second person of the Trinity in the context of his philosophical psychology, the philosophical theory illuminates the theological doctrine as Aquinas understands it. The divine Word which becomes incarnate is to God what an inner word is to a human being: united to the knower, but distinct from him, the means by which the intellect of the knower cognizes extramental objects, and, finally, an object of understanding in its own right, when the intellect reflects on itself. Aquinas's account of the inner word in human cognition is thus a model for him of the divine inner Word, which is the second person of the Trinity.

By setting Aquinas's interpretation of the theological doctrine in its Latin medieval philosophical context in this way, I have, of course, only begun to explain his account, which raises both philosophical and theological questions. How is it possible, for example, that something that can be adequately modeled by an inner word in human intellectual processes is also correctly thought of as a person? How is it possible for something such as an inner word to become a human being? And what is the relation between the second person of the Trinity considered as the divine inner Word and Christ as savior of the world? Whether the Latin medieval model of the divine Word is at all theologically acceptable depends on the answers to these and a host of other questions, which can't be addressed in this short paper.

What I hope to have shown in this paper, however, is not just something about the philosophical context of a particular piece of Latin medieval theology, but also a more general point as well: there are Latin medieval theories which look unintelligible or at least unlovely at first glance but which repay patient exposition by becoming clear and even insightful. Perhaps, in

the end, the Latin medieval theological interpretation of Christ as the divine Word will turn out to be like this, too.³²

NOTES

¹ For an influential discussion of theological doctrine and Aquinas's theory of psychology, see Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum. Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. David Burrell, (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1967). Lonergan's study is flawed by his analysis of Aquinas's psychology, which, in my view, is inaccurate. His analysis goes wrong at the outset because he takes the first operation of the intellect to be a judgment. But Aquinas is clear that the first operation of the intellect is the intellect's grasp of a non-complex, but every judgment is complex.

² I have examined Aquinas's psychology at length in two papers, "Aquinas's Account of the Mechanisms of Intellective Cognition," *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 52 (1998) 287–307, and "Aquinas on the mechanisms of cognition: the sensible species," in *Medieval Analyses in Language and Cognition*, eds. Sten Ebbesen and Russell Friedman, in the series *Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, Historisk-Filologiske Meddelelser* 77 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard), (1999) 377–395; and I have compared it to Ockham's psychology in "The Mechanisms of Cognition: Ockham on Mediating Species," *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, ed. Paul Vincent Spade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 168–203.

³ QDV q.4 a.2: "verbum intellectus nostri, secundum cuius similitudinem loqui possumus de verbo in divinis, est id ad quod operatio intellectus nostri terminatur... quod dicitur conceptio intellectus."

⁴ Aquinas often characterizes intelligible species (as well as sensible species and phantasms) as similitudes. The Latin '*similitudo*' is commonly translated 'likeness,' and this translation has given some readers the impression that a similitude pictorially resembles the thing of which it is a similitude. But this is at best a misleading impression. Some similitudes may be pictorial in character, but not all are. '*Similitudo*' is cognate with '*similis*' (the Latin for 'similar'); and things are similar insofar as they share qualities—or, as Aquinas would say, forms. And so, on his view, "similitude is grounded in an agreement in or sharing of forms. Consequently, there are many kinds of similitude, corresponding to the many ways of sharing forms." (ST I.4.3) See also QDV 8.8: "there is a similitude between two things insofar as there is agreement in form."

⁵ ST I.85.1.

⁶ ST I.85.8.

⁷ See, for example, In DA III.viii.705–706.

⁸ On the other hand, unlike the senses, the intellect is self-reflexive; it also knows itself, its acts and processes. Consequently, an intelligible species is *also* an object of knowledge, but only when the intellect reflects on itself: "in one and the same act of reflection, the intellect cognizes intellectually (*intelligit*) both its own cognition and the species by means of which it cognizes; and so the cognized species is, secondarily, what is cognized, although what is cognized primarily is the thing of which the intelligible species is the similitude" (ST I.85.2).

⁹ SCG I.53.443.

¹⁰ SCG IV.11.3466.

¹¹ SCG I.53.444.

¹² See, e.g., ST Ia.57.1; 85.1 and 5; and In DA III.viii. See also Norman Kretzmann, "Infallibility, Error, and Ignorance" in Richard Bosley and Martin Tweedale, eds., *Aristotle and His Medieval Interpreters (Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary, Volume 17 [1991])*, pp. 159–194.

¹³ In DA III.viii.712–713: Sicut enim supra dictum est, quia non possemus sentire differentiam dulcis et albi, nisi esset una potentia sensitiva communis quae cognosceret utrumque, ita etiam non possemus cognoscere comparisonem universalis ad particularem, nisi esset una potentia quae cognosceret utrumque. Intellectus igitur utrumque cognoscit, sed alio et alio modo. Cognoscit enim naturam speciei, sive quod quid est, directe extendendo seipsum,

ipsum autem singulare per quamdam reflexionem, inquantum redit super phantasmata, a quibus species intelligibiles abstrahuntur. See also, e.g., ST I.86.1 and 85.1 and 2, and In DA III.viii.718: Manifestum est etiam, quod species intelligibiles, quibus intellectus possibilis fit in actu, non sunt obiectum intellectus. Non enim se habent ad intellectum sicut quod intelligitur, sed sicut quo intelligit.

¹⁴ Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p.13. For an excellent recent neurobiological study of *agnosias*, see Martha J. Farah, *Visual Agnosia*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

¹⁵ ST I.55.3. ad 2: dicendum quod cognoscere aliquid in universali, dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo, ex parte rei cognitae, ut scilicet cognoscatur solum universalis natura rei. Et sic cognoscere aliquid in universali est imperfectius: imperfecte enim cognosceret hominem, qui cognosceret de eo solum quod est animal. Alio modo, ex parte medii cognoscendi. Et sic perfectius est cognoscere aliquid in universali: perfectior enim est intellectus qui per unum universale medium potest singula propria cognoscere, quam qui non potest.

¹⁶ Kandell, Eric, Schwartz, James, and Jessell, Thomas. *Principles of Neural Science*, Third Edition. (New York: Elsevier, 1991), p. 831.

¹⁷ ST I.55.3: quanto angelus fuerit superior, tanto per pauciores species universitatem intelligibilium apprehendere poterit. Et ideo oportet quod eius formae sint universales, quasi ad plura se extendentes unaquaeque earum. Et de hoc exemplum aliquantulum in nobis perspicitur potest. Sunt enim quidam, qui veritatem intelligibilem capere non possunt, nisi eis particulatim per singula explicetur: et hoc quidem ex debilitate intellectus eorum contingit. Alii vero, qui sunt fortioris intellectus, ex paucis multa capere possunt.

¹⁸ QDV 8.5.

¹⁹ In DA III.xiii.789.

²⁰ Speaking of the equivalent idea in Aristotle, Joseph Owens, for example, says, "you are the things perceived or known. Knower and thing known...become one and the same in the actuality of cognition. From the strictly epistemological standpoint, this thoroughgoing identity of knower and thing known is the most important and most fundamental tenet in the Aristotelian conception of knowledge. Yet it is the tenet that evokes the hardest sales resistance in students, and is the last Aristotelian dictum to which they come to assent. ...They do not like the idea of being a brown cow or a big bad wolf just because they are seeing those animals or thinking about them." [Joseph Owens, *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry*, (Houston, Texas: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992), p.114].

²¹ See, for example, ST I.78.3.

²² See, e.g., SCG I.63.521: ...omnis cognitio per quamdam assimilationem fiat; and QDV 10.4.obj 5: omnis cognitio est per assimilationem.

²³ ST I.55.2.obj 1: "Omne enim quod intelligitur, per aliquam sui similitudinem in intelligente intelligitur."

²⁴ ST I.14.1: considerandum est quod cognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi formam suam tantum; sed cognoscentia natum est habere formam etiam rei alterius, nam species cogniti est in cognoscente.

²⁵ ST I.14.5: considerandum est quod dupliciter aliquid cognoscitur: uno modo, in seipso; alio modo, in altero. In seipso quidem cognoscitur aliquid, quando cognoscitur per speciem propriam adaequatam ipsi cognoscibili: sicut cum oculus videt hominem per speciem hominis. In alio autem videtur id quod videtur per speciem continentis: sicut cum pars videtur in toto per speciem totius, vel cum homo videtur in speculo per speciem speculi, vel quocumque alio modo contingat aliquid in alio videri. ...Alia autem a se videt non in ipsis, sed in seipso, inquantum essentia sua continet similitudinem aliorum ab ipso.

²⁶ SCG I.46.389: intellectus divinus nulla alia specie intelligibili intelligat quam sua essentia.

²⁷ See, e.g., QDV 8.10 and ST I.55.3.

²⁸ In putting the point this way, I am simplifying for the sake of brevity. Aquinas's account has an additional complexity I can't examine here. For some idea of the complexity, see QDV 2.3 and 4; and QQ 7.1.1.

²⁹ QDV 2.3: Hoc modo autem Deus per essentiam suam effectus suos cognoscit, sicut per similitudinem rei cognoscitur res ipsa.

³⁰ There remains, of course, the question of the nature of the analogue in God's mind to sensory cognition in human minds. This issue can't be addressed in passing here, but Norman Kretzmann and I have discussed it in detail in "God's Knowledge and Its Causal Efficacy," in Thomas Senor, *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 94–124. The discussion of God's knowledge in this paper is dependent on the analyses and arguments in our "God's Knowledge."

³¹ QDV 2.3: una cognitione se et alia cognoscit.

³² I am grateful to Norman Kretzmann for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

THE TRINITY AND NATURAL REASON: LESSONS FROM CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM

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A 17th century philosophical movement, the Cambridge Platonists, defended Trinitarian belief on the grounds of a rich conception of philosophy. They saw reason itself as revealing God's character, and they further saw philosophical inquiry as ideally being carried out in a virtuous community, open to communion with God. The final end of philosophy was a life in union with God. This framework placed God's character at the fore of their philosophical endeavor. Locke is seen as setting up a comparatively more secular outlook, upholding a methodology that treats God's character as less central to a philosophy of God.

Unlike many of the papers in this collection, this essay focuses on the underlying context in which Trinitarian convictions are forged and held. My aim is not to adjudicate debate over social or non-social models of the Trinity but to look at the philosophical terrain in which such debate takes place. I suggest that important gains in this investigation can be made through a historical study of a group of philosophers who flourished in mid-17th century England known as the Cambridge Platonists.

The Cambridge Platonists defended Christian convictions about theism, the incarnation, and the Trinity over against atheistic and deistic challenges. I wish to highlight the way in which they articulated a Trinitarian Christianity in the face of the rising tide of deism and secular alternatives. Their Trinitarian beliefs were set and supported in light of a broad, theistic understanding of reason and a religious conception of the conditions for philosophical inquiry. In this broader, and I believe defensible, context the case for the Trinity is all the more promising than in the narrower context set by John Locke—the most influential early modern philosopher. I believe the Cambridge Platonists provide at least three lessons for those of us interested in defending Trinitarian belief. I shall explore these lessons under the

headings *The Candle of the Lord*, *The Forms of Religious Life*, and *The Virtues of God*. Each of these motivate the Cambridge Platonists to treat at the forefront the character of God, the first sees reason itself as revealing God's nature, the second places one's philosophical practice in a community which is (ideally) in communion with God, and the third sees the final end of philosophy as a striving for unity with God. The lessons are not exclusively to be found in Cambridge Platonism, but they merit articulation in terms of this movement because of Cambridge Platonism's strategic location in the history of ideas. These Cambridge scholars developed a vital, mature Christian philosophy at the very origins of the modern era in Western Europe. They also deserve attention today because some lessons in philosophical theology may be most keenly appreciated when they are set forth over against opposing forces.

A SKETCH OF CAMBRIDGE PLATONISM

The key figures that make up Cambridge Platonism include Benjamin Whichote (1609–1683), Henry More (114–1687), Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688), John Smith (1618–1652), Peter Sterry (d. 1672), and Nathaniel Culverwell (1618–1650). John Norris (1657–1711) and Joseph Glanville (1638–1680) were later adherents from Oxford University. Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) may be considered a yet more distant adherent, though a vital one for the publication of many Cambridge Platonist themes.

The theological heritage of Cambridge Platonism includes the Bible and the early creeds of the Church (Apostle's and Nicea). They were heavily influenced by Plato and Plotinus as well as by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Augustine, Boethius, Dionysius (Denys) the Areopagite, Nicholas of Cusa, and Marsilio Ficino. Cambridge Platonist sources were not just Medieval Christian and Ancient Greek, but extended to Philo and even (for some) the Cabala.

At the heart of Cambridge Platonist spirituality lies the conviction that human nature along with all our sensory and intellectual powers, and nature as a whole are the creation of a supremely good, loving God. Like many in the Platonic tradition within Christianity, this movement emphasized the Good, the True, and the Beautiful as inseparable elements in the philosophy of God. They subordinated positive law to natural law, insisting that God is to be adored for supreme goodness and not brute limitless power. They thereby opposed prevailing forms of theistic voluntarism, according to which good and evil were fixed entirely by God's will. Rather than extol God's

omnipotence, they looked first and foremost to God's goodness. In the *Divine Dialogues* More writes:

But in answer to your main question, wherein the Right of this absolute Sovereignty in God is founded, I must tell you both distinctly and compendiously at once, That to infinite, permanent and immutable Goodness of right belongs as well Omniscency as Omnipotency, the one as her Secretary, the other as her Satellitium. But the infinitely-good God is not only of right, but by nature, both Omniscient and Omnipotent. And from these three, his infinite Goodness, Wisdom and Power, issue out all the Orders of the Creation in the whole Universe.

The Cambridge Platonists believed that this supremely good God is the object of the soul's natural longing. There is in us a natural, in-born tendency and orientation to the good and there is in God a sustained willing that the creation flourish. Platonic themes such as the soul's ascent to God, the soul's pre-natal existence, immortality, and evil's secondary status as a privation of the good run through their work. The God of the Cambridge Platonists is a self-diffusive, perfect being who, out of love, creates and sustains the cosmos. In *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, Cudworth writes that "Love is the supreme Deity and original of all things," which he then articulates in this splendid passage:

Eternal, self-originated, intellectual Love, or essential and substantial goodness...having an infinite overflowing fullness and fecundity, dispenses itself uninvadously, according to the best wisdom, sweetly governs all, without any force or violence (all things being naturally subject to its authority, and readily obeying its laws), and reconciles the whole world into harmony.

The Cambridge Platonists faced two substantial opposing forces: a Puritan enthusiasm which, in the tradition of Tertullian, did not trust natural reason to lead the soul to God on the one hand, and a growing tide of religious skepticism on the other. Lord Herbert of Cherbury contributed to a deistic outlook which embraced significant religious convictions (the existence of God, the importance of divine worship, an afterlife of punishment and reward) but relegated to the side-lines scripture as special revelation, the Incarnation, and Trinity. Seventeenth century British fideists tended to make all of Christianity mysterious while deists tended to whittle Christianity down to that which may be apprised by natural reason. Witness the title of John Toland's deistic text: *Christianity not Mysterious: or a treatise Shewing That there is nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above it: And that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery*.

Cudworth and More defended the Triune nature of God, chiefly on the grounds of revelation. Apart from Scripture, they claimed to find the Trinity in pre-Christian sources. Cudworth's defense of the Trinity was explicitly crafted over against skeptics.

Whereas bold and conceited wits precipitantly condemning the doctrine of the trinity for nonsense, absolute repugnancy to human faculties, and impossibility, have thereupon some of

them quite shaken off Christianity, and all revealed religion, professing only theism; others have frustrated the design thereof, by paganising it into creature worship or idolatry; this ignorant and conceited confidence of both may be returned, and confuted from hence, because the most ingenious and acute of all the Pagan philosophers, the Platonists and the Pythagoreans, who had no bias at all impose upon their faculties, but following free sentiments and dictates of their own minds, did notwithstanding not only entertain this trinity of divine hypostases eternal and uncreated, but were also fond of the hypothesis, and made it a fundamental of their theology.

Henry More joined Cudworth in this claim, exhibiting hints of the Trinity in texts from the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, and elsewhere. More, Cudworth, and Whichcote held that much ancient philosophy had the benefit of direct and indirect revelation in which Hebrew theology found its way into their work. ("Wherefore it is very plain that Pythagoras had a philosophy from Moses," More claimed in his *Conjectura Cabbalistica*). More and Cudworth were not alone in positing such a Hebrew, Biblical connection. They followed the path of Lactantius, Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius.¹

The synthesis between reason and revelation was tested in the lifetime of the Cambridge Platonists and even more severely criticised in the next generation. John Locke and Isaac Newton, who were both strongly influenced by Cambridge Platonism, were not defenders of the Trinity. What happened? Or, putting matters differently, what did the Cambridge Platonists have in their philosophy of religion (Cudworth may have been the first person to use the term "philosophy of religion" in English) that secured God's Triune nature? What did Locke and other moderns lack which made Trinitarian convictions much harder to bolster?

In addressing these questions, let us consider three features of Cambridge Platonism. Each of these place the Trinity in a wider epistemic and value-laden context than we find in Locke and other moderns.

THE CANDLE OF THE LORD

The Cambridge Platonists are most often characterized in the history of ideas as advocates of a high view of reason, which they repeatedly described as "the candle of the Lord." This central motif was taken from Proverbs 20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." The exultation of reason was a watchword of Cambridge Platonism. Benjamin Whichcote celebrated reason in his widely circulated aphorisms. "To go against Reason, is to go against God: it is the self same thing, to do that which the Reason of the Case doth require; and that which God Himself doth appoint: Reason is the Divine Governor of Man's Life; it is the very Voice of God." What needs to be emphasized here is that the Cambridge Platonists understood reason to be the Lord's; reason is divine in origin and safe-guarded by God. In More's view,

exercising our reason can amount to a communion with God. "The intellect of man is as it were a small Compendious Transcript of the Divine Intellect, and we feel in a manner in our own Intellects the firmness and immutability of the Divine, and of the etereal and immutable Truths exhibited there."

More, Whichcote, and Cudworth shared with contemporary Empiricists and Rationalists a deep allegiance to rational reflection, but they also saw reason and our powers of perception, as open to God's leading in religious experience. By their lights, human life is to be understood in thorough-going theistic, not deistic, terms. Nature is not remote from the life of God either metaphysically or epistemologically; the character and very being of nature is derived from God's good conservation and creativity. Natural reason, like nature itself, is upheld and conserved by God. I propose that in the very exercise of reason they discovered (or believed they perceived or were made aware of) God's character. This discovery, perception or awareness was not so much a matter of sophisticated inference. Reason was not essentially a token or clue of the divine (though it could serve as this); it was divine. This analogy may prove to be useful: a person's smile is not essentially or merely a token or clue of the person's happiness; it is part and parcel of the person's happiness. Or, using the Cambridge Platonist's favorite image, the light from a candle is not something that is a bare clue that a candle is in front of you; to see the candle's light can amount to seeing the candle itself. Of course, smiles may be deceptive, and one may see light without knowing its source. But if More is right, the exercise of reason itself can be an occasion for the non-deceptive awareness of God as the source of both our reasoning and our life itself. For More and the other Cambridge Platonists reason was not a secular organ. Natural reason does not enjoy autonomy from God. As More writes in the *Divine Dialogues*: "It is the Rule of the Spirit of God in the Soul, who takes the reins of all our Powers, Faculties and Affections into his own hand, and curbs them and excites them according to his own most holy Will, that is carried to no particular Self-interest, but ever directs to that which is simply and absolutely the best." C.A. Patrides correctly observes: "All that the Cambridge Platonists ever uttered reverts to the end of Whichcote's refusal to oppose the spiritual to the rational, the supernatural to the natural, Grace to Nature." This faith in the concord between Nature and Grace animates their extant meditations, sermons, treatises, essays, dialogues, poetry, aphorisms, and prayer. "The spirit of a Man is the Candle of the Lord, Lighted by God and Lighting us to God."

This God-oriented view of reason does not, alone, secure Trinitarian belief. Obviously an honest theistic inquirer may believe that divine reason leads to a Unitarian or deistic view of God. But by construing reason itself as divine, inquirers are not construing their philosophy of God using tools which are thoroughly secular, and set apart from God. An apologist for the Trinity still has work to do in a debate between persons who accept a divine

epistemology. One still needs to inquire into whether belief in the Trinity is invited by reason or revelation or whether belief in the Trinity is irreconcilable with reason. But when this debate occurs between parties who recognize the divine in reason, the debate is more open to the ways in which God's character may be disclosed. An analogy may be useful. David Hume launched his famous case against miracles with the definition of a miracle as a violation of a law of nature. Hume implicitly advances the notion that the laws of nature stand independent of God's will, thus making a particular act of God's will (the Resurrection) into an act of transgression or violence, rupturing the integrity of nature's laws. One promising reply to Hume is to challenge his anti-theistic view of nature's laws. If one may successfully construe the laws of nature as God's will, then a miracle may be seen as a particular or different act of God rather than God's violation of something quite independent of God. Similarly, if one may successfully construe reason itself as God's organ, then the revelation that God is Triune may be understood not as a violation of something independent of God. If belief in the Trinity is brought home to reason through revelation, this may be seen as God's adding to our ordinary God-given reason, an extraordinary God-given reason.¹

The Cambridge Platonist belief in God's authorship of nature and miracles, natural reason and revelation, led them to staunchly oppose a conflict between faith and reason. In *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature*, Culverwell writes that faith is not "a bird of prey that comes to peck out the eyes of men"; "faith is no extinguisher to put out the candle of the Lord." Throughout this discourse faith and reason are described in an abundance of positive images, including the romantic "Reason and Faith may kiss each other." Revelation and miracles are seen as exceptional, but widely available passages for the soul to become enjoined in the life of God.

Now the Spirit of man is the Candle of the Lord. First, as...a derivative light, a light from a light. Surely there's none can think that light is primitively and originally in the Candle; but they must look upon that only as a weak participation of something that is more bright and glorious. All created excellency shines with borrowed beams, so that reason is but...a breath of the divine breeze.

It is the divine concurrence that anchors the reliability of our faculties.²

For Cudworth the participation in the life of God was wrapt up in the God's Triune nature which he described in terms of Love, Wisdom and Power. This God-filled account of reason led the Cambridge Platonists to two further points I shall present and then offer some observations about the merits of their position.

FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Cambridge Platonists were sufficiently embedded in the historic Platonic tradition so as to hold that the pursuit of divine wisdom requires a life of virtue. More and Smith frequently cited Plotinus' *Ennead* on this front, and one of their favorite passages bears repeating.

If the eye that adventures the vision be dimmed by vice, impure, or weak, and unable in its cowardly blenching to see the uttermost brightness, then it sees nothing even though another point to what lies plain to sight before it. To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful. Therefore, first let each become godlike and beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty.

Following many Christian Platonists (and Neoplatonists) More writes: The "Mysterie of God lies not bare to false and adulterous eyes, but is hid and wrapped up in decent coverings from the sight of Vulgar and Carnal men" The Cambridge Platonists strove to forge a spirituality that inextricably links faith and practice. John Smith outlined a profoundly integrated picture of faith and practice, sight and activity:

If we see things as they are, we shall live as we ought, and if we live as we ought, we shall see things as they are. This is not a vicious circle, but the interplay of contemplation and action of Theoria and Praxis, in which wisdom consists. Action is the ritual of contemplation, as dialectic is its creed. The conduct of life rests on an act of faith which begins as an experiment and ends as an experience.

For Smith and the others, the intellectual investigation of religious beliefs is not a merely academic or theoretical undertaking.

How does this bear on their Trinitarian Convictions? The Cambridge Platonists did not think of reason or doctrine with no concern for the personal context of such reflection. Being open to God's reality requires being affectively and cognitively open to God's revelation. They did not propose that in order to have justified true belief in the Trinity you had to be a member of a religious community which believed in the Trinity. Even so, you had to be cognitively and affectively open to God's Triune nature, seeking God not just theoretically but also practically by living a life of virtue. Trinitarian belief was not, then, a merely academic enterprise, but one that crucially involved the soul's search for God.³

The Cambridge Platonists held that the cultivation of goodness in their own lives was essential in the search for the good in their philosophy. The philosopher who is loving is more likely to understand love than an equally intelligent philosopher who is not. The searching, loving, pathos of Cambridge Platonism makes them far closer to Augustine than (as we shall see below) Locke.

THE VIRTUES OF GOD

The Cambridge Platonists linked their conception of God with their understanding of the virtues of creation, both moral and nonmoral. (By 'nonmoral virtues' I mean those goods such as the proper functioning of one's body and the natural world all of which are good though they do not involve the exercise of moral virtues.) The Trinitarian and Christological convictions of the Cambridge Platonists were wrapped up in their convictions about the virtues of the world. They saw right living and religious practice as a way to conjoin a recognition and delight in the virtues of this world and the excellences of God. This allowed them to see the goal of philosophy in terms of a participation in and with the life of the Triune God.

In her short but illuminating monograph, *Ralph Cudworth*, Mother Maria writes: "Cudworth sees man's participation in correspondence to the perfect unity within the dynamic relationship of the Persons of the Trinity, to the unity and inter-relationship of Love, Wisdom, and Power." The relation between Creator and the goodness of the creature is so close that More readily refers to the aim of religious life in terms of deiformity, "the perfecting of human nature by participation of the Divine."

Lord Herbert and subsequent deistic theologians were not silent about the goodness of the world. Indeed Lord Herbert maintained that the world's order and nature constitute a good reason to believe there is a God. But he and other deists did not understand our appreciation of the goods of creation and our development of divine virtues as setting us on a path that unites our virtues to their source in God. For the Cambridge Platonists, our interior appropriation of the divine is what leads us to union with God. Cudworth casts this teaching explicitly in relation to Christ.

The great mystery of the Gospel, doth not lie only in Christ without us (though we must know also what He hath done for us), though we must know also what He hath done for us), but the very pith and kernel of it consists in Christ inwardly formed in our hearts. Nothing is truly ours, but what lives in our spirits. Salvation itself cannot save us so long as it is only without us; no more than health can cure us and make us sound when it is not within us, but somewhere at a distance from us.⁴

Because of their high view of the spiritual union between the soul and God, Cambridge Platonists had a great investment in searching out the interior nature of God. The deistic God was a remote, essential condition for the existence and structure of a good creation. Whether or not *that* concept of God was Triune had no impact on deistic spirituality. But for the Trinitarian philosophical theologian, union with Christ and being inspired by the Holy Spirit involve a participation in the life of God. The truth of the doctrine of the Trinity thereby has vital implications for the meaning of religious life. The Cambridge Platonists commended a philosophical openness to what they saw

as the sufficient evidential testimony to God's Triunity, for this not only was a reasonable frame of mind for a philosopher, it was also a gateway to a deified life.

LOCKE, MODERN PHILOSOPHY, AND THE TRINITY

Modern philosophy in Europe, roughly philosophy from the 17th century onward, did not follow these tenets of Cambridge Platonism. The lessons were not altogether repudiated. John Locke, for example, never explicitly denied the Trinity. He held that God's existence is evident to reason and that Christ is the Messiah. He also held that our cognitive powers stem from God. But he placed this understanding of reason and God in the background. At the foreground one finds, instead, a religiously neutral epistemology. The tasks of epistemology and our cognitive grasp of the world were not understood as participating in God's life. God was to be inferred logically, rather than discovered internally as reflected in an innate idea or in our religious longing. Moreover, there was no room for the conviction that religious forms of life may be essential to the justification of, or warrant in, our belief in God or, more specifically, in the Trinity. Epistemology is secularized and more impersonal. Locke's understanding of the good is essentially hedonistic (good is equated with pleasure, evil with pain) and there is not the same emphasis on the virtues as we find in Cambridge Platonism (or in Aquinas, Aristotle, Plato). Locke writes in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

Things then are Good or Evil, only in reference to Pleasure or Pain. That we call *Good*, which is *apt to cause or increase Pleasure, or diminish Pain in us; or else to procure, or preserve us the possession of any other Good, or absence of any Evil*. And on the contrary we name that *Evil*, which is *apt to produce or increase any Pain, or diminish any Pleasure in us; or else to procure us any Evil, or deprive us of any Good*.

The Cambridge Platonists had a much wider reading of good and evil, virtue and vice. For them, the very interaction of mind and body in our embodiment may be understood in terms of God-given virtues (good powers), quite independent of matters of pleasure and pain. For Locke, natural goods were not a reflection of or participation in the life of God.

One may see Locke's recession from the Trinity in a manuscript "Some general reflections upon the beginnings of St. John's Gospel." Locke sets out to defuse a case for the Trinity which stems from John 1:1: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was God." Locke proposes that St. John had "not writ his Gospel to make us believe that Jesus is the Supreme God, or an eternal spirit of the same nature with his Father but to instruct us in that essential truth that Jesus is Messiah...the Son of God in a sense of office and commission...which does not explain his nature, but his authority and

power.” Reference in Scripture to the Holy Spirit, for Locke, is not reference to a person in the Godhead but to the power of God. In Locke’s work, one may see God’s interaction with us, and the function of our religious belief, in largely utilitarian terms.

I suggest that a full-blooded defense of the Trinity within a Lockean framework faces an uphill battle. A fuller framework in which we understand epistemology in relation to competing metaphysical schemes is needed. A non-question-begging debate needs to be open to alternative conceptions of reason, the context for philosophical inquiry, and the respects in which the goods of the world may (or may not) reflect God.

Contemporary philosophy of religion has many resources on hand to recover the Trinitarian convictions of the Cambridge Platonists. The belief that our cognitive powers are underwritten by a good God has received new life in the work of Alvin Plantinga and also Nicholas Wolterstorff. Contemporary arguments for theism from religious experience (R. Swinburne, W. Alston, C. Davis, W. Yandell, *et al*) may be sharpened and brought to bear on the Trinity. Religious experience is often integral to religious forms of life, a life that may further refine the appreciation and adoration of God’s Triune being. Virtue theory is also making a come-back in ethics, epistemology, and even in a more comprehensive understanding of ourselves in the world.¹ If this is successful, it, too, may amplify our understanding of the Trinity as reflected in the goods of creation.

I do not suggest that these lessons from the Cambridge Platonists are unique. Even so, I believe that their witness to the Trinity deserves a special place in any history of the Trinity in modern European thought.⁴

NOTES

¹See “Hume’s Racism and His Case against the Miraculous,” *Philosophia Christi*, 4:2, pp. 427-441. An important overview of the terrain here is *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers; Faith, Trinity, Incarnation* by H.A. Wolfson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). See especially Part Two: “The Trinity, the Logos, and the Platonic Ideas.” In *The True Intellectual System* Cudworth objects to di-theism and tri-theism on the grounds that they are incompatible with God’s supremacy. In Book 1, Chapter IV, he argues that the Trinity is “agreeable to reason.” Cudworth’s case for the Trinity is essentially an appeal to revelation and the absence of independent reasons for thinking Trinitarian belief is incoherent. “We cannot but take notice here of a Wonderful Providence of Almighty God, that this Doctrine of a Trinity of Divine Hypostases, should find such Admittance and Entertainment in the Pagan world, and be received by the wisest of all their philosophers, before the times of Christianity, and thereby to prepare a more easy way for the reception of Christianity among the Learned Pagans” (Chapter IV). The appeal to pagan wisdom is not essentially an appeal to arguments from natural reason, but an appeal to what the pagans absorbed through revelation. “And these things (faith he) ...by Plato purloined from the Philosophy and Theology of the Hebrews.” As noted earlier, my paper focusses on the *framework* and *epistemology* of Cambridge Platonism, a framework that made them receptive to the Trinity, rather than some of the specific details of their beliefs about the Trinity, e.g. double or single procession of the Holy Spirit.

² By placing their theory of knowledge as part of an overall metaphysic and theory of values, they cast reason in teleological terms. The *telos* or point of reason was to lead the creature to a life of flourishing with creation and the Creator. God’s leading us through revelation to belief in the Trinity was seen as one element among others in the fulfillment of our very being. Trinitarian belief did not enjoy as secure a place as theism alone, but it was seen as “welcomed or invited by reason.” Cambridge Platonist epistemology did not traffic with the view that reason is God’s harsh officer, arresting us when we believe in something reasonable about God but not apodictically certain. Reason was not instilled in us to keep us from God.

³ Early Christian philosophers appealed to the goodness of Christian forms of life as part of their case for Christian theism. See, for example, *Octavius* by Minucius Felix. In this dialogue, Octavius, a Christian, converts Caecilius, to Christian faith using general theistic arguments, but this includes the distinctive Christian way of life. “Philosophical wisdom we parade not in our speech but in our lives” (Chapter 38).

⁴ My thanks to members of the conference for comments on an earlier draft of this paper, as well as to Kurtis Parlin.

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THE HOLY TRINITY AND NON-CHRISTIAN TRIADES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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The paper deals with a comparison between the Trinity and its most outwardly similar counterpart outside Christianity, that is the Hindu model of *trimurti* (lit. “the three forms”). The common idea is one of divine nature as manifested in three personifications which don’t divide into parts and present themselves in mutually-supplementary relations. The most important difference emerges from the fact that Brachman, Vishnu and Siva are not personalities in the real sense, but only cosmic functions of the “anonymous” Absolute. This gives an opportunity to draw the Hindu model together with a wide range of heterodox triads beginning with the three “masks” of Sabellius (3rd century A.D.) and early antitrinitarians.

1. The development of the main dogma of the Christian faith, the dogma of the Holy Trinity, which dominated the mind of the Holy Fathers during the period of the Ecumenical councils and continues to the present (the Christian mentality is trinitarian in essence, and therefore Christian thought cannot help but center on the Divine triade) has been on two main tracks. In the beginning of its development, Christian theologians tried to piece together the prototype–revelation of the Old Testament and incorporate this with the data of the New Testament relevant to the Holy Trinity (Cf., “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” Mt. 28, 19–20.” This is undoubtedly the nucleus of the initial baptismal formula). There are enough New Testament illustrations of the Holy Trinity to draw the conclusion that Christian divine revelation is triadic and that this revelation constitutes the principle doctrine distinguishing it from all other theological models, and, at the same time, transfigures the truth of biblical monotheism. However, these illustrations apparently haven’t been sufficient to remove the various misconceptions and misconstruals of Christian belief,

which historically have largely developed according to the predilections and dictates of a strong hyper-rationalist temper by which insistent but limited minds could see no further than a compromise with a threatening polytheism. Hence there was a strong and persistent resistance to the triadic element of trinitarian theology, and a trend toward what was believed to be a more palpable common-sense monologic monotheism. There has been a line of heretics (*heresiarches*) starting with Paul of Samosate (the Second Century A.D.), who have tried to *amend* trinitarian monotheism to fit their point of view. There was a concentrated effort to make the doctrine appeal more to the intellect. In keeping with this agenda, the Fathers of the Church turned to the legacy of ancient classical rationality in their attempt to develop a logic and language in terms of which sense could be given to the supra-rational being of Revelation, the Tri-une God. Thus they turned to a system of philosophical categories, and the result of their endeavor was the *churching* [baptizing, as Westerners might say] of the notions *nature* and *hypostasis*, making distinctions that only added to the already existing confusion, and worse, generated heretical conceptions built upon a mistaken Christology and Pneumatology.

However, during the development of the churching [or baptism] of reason, the method of analogies was developed and expanded, by which natural reason could easily conceptualize or grasp the supra-intelligent Being without appealing to Revelation. In the course of efforts to appeal to external analogies, scholars managed to single out the likenesses of three consubstantial Persons put together in terms of natural categories, the most prominent defender of whom was Tertullian (for whom a triunity analogue was, *source-wellspring-flow*); and later the Eastern Fathers (who worked with such analogues as; *root-stem-fruit*, *sun-ray-light*, *fire-shine-warmth*).¹ The inconsistency of these likenesses consists in trying to compare what is incompatible, inasmuch as any of the listed creature-wise analogues have nothing in common with the distinctions of the three Persons in question. More obvious was the fact that what stood in the way of drawing such analogies was the radical gap that exists between creatures and uncreated Persons. Moreover, if we take the comparisons [only hinted at] seriously, then they turn out to be nothing more than analogous explanations of what stands in direct opposition to the object to be explained—precisely that *naive monotheistic* doctrine conceived and contrived by the heretics. Nevertheless, these analogies were very popular among the Eastern Fathers, and the Cappadocians, who at first rejected them, but then changed to a more favorable response. St. Gregory the Theologian, who probably more than others in his pursuit for truth uncovered the unsearchable character of the Holy Trinity, but then turned critic of his own solar dialogues.² One would have thought then, that these analogies which were drawn and applied for so long a time, should have met with St. Augustine's critical disapproval.

However, Augustine himself proposed instead to take up the task of drawing analogies as a means for understanding trinitarian theology. His attitude toward them showed a serious interest in anthropomorphic analogies (*intelligence–knowledge–love; memory–reason–will; being–thinking–charity*), in addition to explanations of *Gospel definitions* of God, such as, *subject of love–object of love–love itself*.³ But even this natural analogy, which is, no doubt, more appropriate (due to the fact that *love*, according to its inherent meaning involves the binding together of different persons, which is missed completely in the analogy of *sun, rays and light*) to an interpretation of the Divine Triunity, evidences an element of functionalism, hence it diminishes considerably the lofty *triadological*, interpersonal essence of Trinitarian dogma. Consequently, functionalism ends up being dogmatized via the *Filioque* formula, which has historically always been ascribed to Augustine.⁴

Nevertheless the importance of triadic analogies as a response to the demands of reason deserves serious attention. Reason cannot fail to perceive the value of internal arguments in support of the central dogma of the Christian faith, since if this belief is to have a universal appeal in its defense, then external arguments (an external rationale) are important to its defense as well. A supportive strategy must therefore meet the conditions of legitimacy required of analogy, the minimal principle which was formulated and passed down from the ancients, viz., *that similar is known by similar*. Satisfaction of this condition holds more promise than a naturalistic analysis of the Divine Triunity, or an anthropomorphic one, say the drawing of some sort of correspondence of the Christian triadology with at least *prima facie* parallels in other religious models, with which every comparative religion specialist is quite familiar. Naturally, the most interesting triades are those which by their form (about their *matter* we'll speak shortly) approximate most nearly the Christian trinitarian idea. This turn is the second track in terms of which understanding the Trinity is developed.

2. Among the comparative analogies, the model of *trimurti* (literally, *three forms*, three bodies), may be singled out as a Hindu sort of reflection of the Absolute according to three inter-complementary forms, each correlating with the cosmogonic functions of creation, sustenance and destruction of the world, with the corresponding three supreme deities of the Indian pantheon, *Brachman*, *Vishnu* and *Siva*.

Prerequisites of *trimurti* can also be found in triadic forms of some Vedantas gods, for example, in the image of Agni, who is present in heaven as the Sun, as lightning in the atmosphere and in the common fire of earth.⁵ We see this also in the three deities connected with animal sacrifice.⁶ However, more recently it appears in the *Maitri–Upanishad*, where Brachman as the absolute principle of Being appears in *Three Images of Dominion*, *Brachman*, *Rudras* (i.e. Sivas) and *Vishnu*. In a similar way the feminine, masculine and neuter are types of his *genus*, and fire, wind and sun types of his *shining* (VI.

4–5). Further steps of *trimurti*–construction formation are described in the epic texts, the late *Upanishad*⁷ and in the poetry of Caledasas.⁸ At these stages one may assume that there was an indirect influence of Mahayana Buddhism, wherein the idea of three bodies of Buddha (*tricaya*) is developed, which is conceptually at variance with the Hindu model.⁹ The model of *trimurti* was accepted mostly by Sivaïtes. In *Linga-purahne* (I.18. 12) the Absolute, which corresponds to the Eternal Siva (*Sadasiva*), appears in three emanations: *Brahman*, the creator of the world, *Vishnu*, its sustainer, and *Siva (Bhava)*, its destroyer. Because of this, Siva appears as if divided, and through this the theoretically presupposed “neutrality” of the Absolute is violated. But instead the priorities of *confession* (of course, the notion of *confession* in this context takes on a very different meaning from what it does in the Christian faith) directed toward the deity were only strengthened. In the traditions of the late *Vishnu bhakti*, for example, at Nimbarka (XIII cen.) the configuration was altered. Absolute–Vishnu is presented in three forms, one of which corresponds to “Little Vishnu.” And both Sivaïtes and Vishnuïtes are viewed as cosmological functions correlating with three *gunas* (limited principles of the micro and macrocosmic) of Sankhya philosophy. In *trimurti*, Vishnu personalizes the operation of enlightenment, the element of *sattwa*, Brahman the energetic *radjus*, and Siva the destructive *tamas*. The main philosophy issuing from this correlation, consists in an ontological sketching of Brahman as an absolute and unchanging principle of this world, and as underlying all activity in the cosmos. The latter is taken as relative to other deities. Correlations also have their graphic images: in Sivaïtes’ pictures of *trimurti*, the fourth head of the eternal Siva is placed above the three sculptured figures standing next to each other; at Vishnuïtes of Nepal, behind the three figures is situated a column, corresponding to the fourth person, *lofty* Vishnu.

These images appear rather late and lack popularity among ordinary Hindi people because of their excessive philosophical force and content. One of the most famous images dates back to the Seventh Century, and is found in a south–Indian cave ensemble, in Elura architecture, the magnificent rock–cut Sivaïte temple of Kailasanatha.

The main strategic goal of the creators of the abstract cult of *trimurti* was to unify the supreme deities of Hinduism to establish their supremacy over the rivals of Jainism and Buddhism. The other goal was to try to harmonize in the framework of Hinduism itself the beliefs of Vishnuïtes and Sivaïtes.¹⁰

3. Now let us consider what sort of contribution the largest religion makes to Christian theology in terms of certain similarities or analogues to the Divine Triunity in Christian thought. Had the model of *trimurti* counted as a Hindu borrowing from Christianity, then this information would not be very useful to the cause, save as an additional argument in a discourse about priorities. But this is not at all a weighty or significant connection, because *trimurti* does not occupy a central place in Hinduism in the way that the doctrine of the

Trinity does in Christianity (besides, in Hinduism we have the pantheistic doctrine of Brahman–Absolute). In fact, the date of the Eastern model we have in mind according to the *Maitri–Upanisad*, starts around two hundred years before A.D.¹¹ Since the native resources of *trimurti* construction refer to a considerably later period of antiquity, we have adequate grounds to presuppose its (from the historical–cultural point of view) autochthonic origin. However from the theological point of view, one would think that its origin is not entirely autochthonic. That is because it deals with the *rest of light* conception of initial Revelation that extends to the peoples of the world, a concept developed by the *Fathers of Church*. In the case of the latter, we have the notion of one Divine nature, manifested through three personifications. This is unquestionably true. Moreover, the three personifications don't divide or separate, hence they are *unconfused and inseparable*. Here, however, the system–making elements are evident. One of the first researchers of the *Bhagavata–Purana* (which contains the Hindu concept in question), French indologist J. Roussel (at the end of the Nineteenth Century) noted that in the *trimurti* the notions of *inseparableness–manifestation* and *mystification*, deal with three functional masks of Anonyme, but never the *unity of Three Persons*. Indeed, the three personifications of the Hindu Absolute are his three *cosmological functions*, co–complementary each to the other, not inter–subjectively, but *fully objectively*, as principles of creation, stability and destruction. It is absolutely evident that under the retention of the external format of triunity the inner fulfillment which is in view in this case, is quite different, and we cannot help but see here the apparent deformation of this format, a deformation, in which, as in all similar instances, is realized in the simplification of the deformed.¹²

No matter how evident the process of *metaphysical reduction* is in respect to the super–intelligent personalism of rational cosmologism (the concept of *trimurti*, contrary to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, does contain in itself practically nothing surpassing the possibilities of what Kant called *Religion within the limits of reason alone*), it is not that which properly attracts our attention. Rather, our attention is attracted to the unconditional appropriateness of the comparative–religious parallels thought of as providing the basis for the inference that external argumentation establishes the dogma of the Holy Trinity. This strategy is not necessarily connected with simplifying and simultaneously disorienting naturalistic and anthropomorphic analogies. Indeed, the inseparable and unconfused notion associated with the Biblical God as triadic, even after a loss of the concept of the mystery of Divine inter–subjectivity, is a more substantial external witness, than is the drawing of distinctions having to do with physical and psychic phenomena. However this sort of thing is not the only helpful service which a Hindu triade can provide for Christian theology. The history of anti–Trinitarian heresies at first glance is like a rather colorful quilt, in which, the outlines of repetitious

patches, single out the *scheme* (in a Kantian sense), or its exact form. Following the metaphor, the patch, which bore the name modalism, first appeared in the construction of the ancient heretic, Sabellius (at the beginning of the Third Century A.D.). According to his design the Godhead is initially an *anonymous* (*anonym*) *Monad*, then it is silent, developing step-wise into a *Triade*, and then in turn accepts masks, each of three persons (when he speaks). And so, God the Father manifests Himself in the *Old Testament*, as the Son in the *New Testament*, as the Holy Spirit after the event of Pentecost, in order to return at the end of time, according to Sabellius, to the initial, *anonym* stage.¹³

Ten centuries later, around 1210, in Paris, the heresy of Joakim of Fiori (from Calabria) was discovered, which was also proposed to his adepts, i.e., his analogical historiosophy, in which he distinguished three periods in the history of the Church: under the step-wise guidance of Each of the Holy Trinity; with the last period, that of the Holy Spirit, which had already started in the Thirteenth Century (under the leadership of Joachim himself) and was completed no later than 1360. Among his adepts were the followers of Amalric of Bena (d. 1206), which easily combined this historiosophy with pantheistic doctrine. They considered themselves so impregnated by the Holy Ghost, that (completely in the spirit of tantrism) they thought that no sin could stain them, and therefore, repudiated participation in the Sacraments. Though Amalricians were caught in a very difficult position for the promulgation of their doctrine, their influence continued periodically for more than three centuries, first influencing the Brothers of the Holy Ghost.¹⁴

Later on the scene the Anti-trinitarians appeared. A famous teacher among them, M. Servetus (d. 1553), undertook the "Restoration of Christianity," and treated Hypostasis as modes of self-proclamation and communication of the Godhead, but not as ontologically Absolute Persons. The famous German mystic, Jacob Boeme (1575–1624) also allowed his Absolute to be called *abyss*, which is pictured as begetting the *ground*, so as to manifest itself in three modalities of will, which correspond to Three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

Some evident parallels are found among several Russian theologians of the *Silver* and *Post-silver* Age, as we see in the constructions of Fr. Pavel Florensky and Fr. Sergei Bulgakov. Besides the Three Persons, the Wisdom of God as hypostasized Sophia, appears in the world. She (Wisdom) has, according to these authors, many *bearings*, which include even being a hidden divine nature of the Holy Trinity Himself. Finally, in modern Western theology, God as Absolute is also sometimes *added* to the Three Hypostases (these views are reflected in some reports presented at the conference).

The meaning of *trimurti* lies in the fact that the Indian model of triadology allows almost a palpable elucidation of one coefficient of all the above-listed Trinitarian doctrines, which on account of this Being are aligned

in a very orderly manner. The common denominator of these, were discrete *fractures*, which could be written in a *1+3 formula*, where the first item corresponds to an impersonal Proto-substance, and the second to Her three equivalent personifications, the ontological value of which could not be immanent to Them as such, but rather drawn from Her bosom. The veiled schemes of Sabellius and his numerous adherents are disclosed according to the law of topology, in the crystal-clear Hindu model, and together with this last form united in essence alternatively with the unique Triad, in which One Essence belongs solely to the Three Persons, and doesn't exist above them. Departing from this, we can make the prognosis that further advancements in Christian triadology shall be developed along the lines of the same impersonal scheme; and their Hindu formula will be, if one takes into consideration the central position of the dogma of the Holy Trinity in the Christian world-view, one more proof that Christianity can be either nothing, or Orthodox.

NOTES

¹ Lk. Tertullian *Adverse Praxeus*, ch. 8; St. Athanasios of Alexandria, *Against Arians*, *Orat.4*; St. Gregory of Nazianze, *Theological Works*, 5; St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomios*, Book 1.

² See Works, 31, 32. Later St. John Damascene (675–753) says, bringing analogies between the relationship of the Father and the Son [and understanding them as] relationships of fire and its light...seemed to be unsuccessful, rather relational, for light, inseparably generating from the fire and always being inside it, doesn't have its own, in comparison with fire, hypostasis, as the natural attribute of fire; but the Son of God consubstantial with the Father begotten inseparably and indivisibly, and being always in Him, has His own Hypostasis in comparison with the Hypostasis of the Father," St. John Damascene, *Exact Deposition of the Orthodox Faith*, M., 1992, p. 13.

³ St. Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, XV, 3, 7, *et al.*

⁴ The influence of St. Augustine in this case, however, was never limited by Catholicism only; many Orthodox theologians (say nothing of preachers) used anthropomorphic analogies very willingly and use them today (not forgetting those in nature). There is no need to list particular examples, since they are so common.

⁵ *Rigveda* I. 144, II. 4.5, XX. 4.5, and so forth.

⁶ *Rigveda* V. 5.8.

⁷ *Ramottaratapany–Up.* I. 16.

⁸ *Cumarasambhava* II. 14.

⁹ The difference between them is, the Buddhist triade is consistently vertical. The three bodies of Buddha are placed one under the other: the supreme *dharma–kaya* (cosmic Buddha, or Absolute) emanates in the form of *Sambhoga–kaya* (common buddhas and *bodgisattva*) which in its turn is considerably higher than the third level of *Nirvana–kaya* (the temporally functioning historical founder of Buddhism). And *trimurti* is arranged in a vertical–horizontal order: the Absolute is ontologically primeval in relation to and emanating from him in triades, the members of which, however, are placed on the same level.

¹⁰ The cult of Brahman, however, was very respectful, but in reality it was completely insignificant in comparison to the veneration of Vishnu and Siva.

¹¹ However, the *Upanishad* were not considered by the Hindus themselves to be very authoritative, a claim that is established by the fact that the commentaries on the 10 *Upanishads* were ascribed to the famous Sankara (VII–VIII cen.), but not the *Maitri*. On the other hand, the *Maitri* cannot be attributed to the late yogi and sectarian *Upanishad*, because the *Maitri* belongs to the school of the Vedas–Black Jiadgur–veda, which is a trait of relative antiquity. Because of the unquestioned reflection in the text of Buddhist thought, especially in the first part or introduction, where the tsar Brihadragha leaves his kingdom because he contemplates infinite world sufferings, all seems to allow the suggested date. From the point of view of language considerations, the *Maitri* was attributed to the post–Pannini stage (the most credible date of the *Eight Books of Pannini*, of the 4th Century B.C.), along with the comparatively ancient *Svetasvashara–upanishad* (O. Vecker), but from the point of view of parallel passage analysis of different *Upanishads*. For more, see Syrkin A., *Some Problems of Upanishad Studies*, M., 1971, pp. 14, 33.

¹² It is noteworthy, certainly, to regard one more possibility, the historical influence of the Indian model upon early Christians, for during the period of the formation of the New Testament texts, which deals with the revelation of the Holy Trinity, there could not be any notice as to contacts with the regions where we find the initial spreading of Christianity in the Indian world. For more details, see Shokhin V., "Ancient India in the Russian Culture," M., 1988, pp. 17–30. The opposite opinion is held by Krishnaites and Rerich's followers, the visions of which cannot be taken seriously by the bearers of the scientific method.

¹³ Quite rightly, Sabellius, according to the chief witness about him (St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, *Adverse heresies*, 62) applied too widely the discussed naturalistic and anthropomorphic analogies. (The Father is similar to a spherical body, the Son to light, the Holy Spirit to warmth, and they are also correspondingly, similar to a body, a soul, and a spirit, see Lk. Bolotov B., *Lectures on the History of the Ancient Church*. V. 2, 1994, p. 316).

¹⁴ It is possible to learn about dates, bibliography, and sources regarding the doctrine in question beginning with Joakim of Fiori, and from an anthology, Wakefield W. L., Evans, A. P. *Heresies of the High Middle Age*, Selected Sources and Annotated. NY, 1991, pp. 258, 730.

THE DOGMA OF THE TRINITY AND ITS SOCIAL-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

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My preference is to stay within the sphere more akin to literature than science. I focus on the paradoxical element some think exist in the dogma of the Trinity. The problem concerns human existence as much as it does God's. This inclines me to consider Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger. If we follow Sartre, we have *identity* without *essence*. If we follow Heidegger, we have persons, along with God, as *being* rather than *Existence*, which he takes as extremes. The solution may be in Emmanuel Levinas. No nature exists in naked form, but always has a mode of existence. So nature, God's *nature* is always *ipostasis*.

First of all I'd like to say, that I'll remain in the framework of the Orthodox tradition, in particular it's style of teaching about the Trinity, which was demonstrated by Bishop Kallistos. I'd also like to comment on remarks made by Professor Swinburne, in his "Modern Anglo-American Philosophy of Religion" in this manuscript, which called to our attention the fact that the Western team at the conference does not have anyone representing the continental tradition. In part, he said that for those representing the Anglo-American tradition, continental philosophy is something *foggy and unclear, resembling literature rather than science*. I will try to share some thoughts about our conference recommending that we stay in this *foggy and unclear sphere, resembling literature rather than science*, rather than follow the more strict analytic philosophy of religion style so characteristic of the more general terrain of analytical philosophy and logical positivism, hoping all the while to preserve something in the way of a respectable theology.

In both *Western* and *Eastern* reports the main aspects of the teaching of the Trinity were highlighted fairly clearly, nevertheless some questions remain. Bishop Kallistos, which is usually taken to be a credible source of the Orthodox tradition, especially in the Western world, also admitted this fact.

Despite the fact that all Orthodox believers are inclined to think that all of the key dogmas of Christianity, including the dogma of the Trinity, have already been expressed by the works of the Fathers of the Church, mainly in the classical Patristic period of the Fourth–Eighth centuries, still the problem of secondary interpretation of what was said by the ancient teachers of the Eastern Church remain. Questions about the level of theological thinking, even in the strictly Eastern tradition linger. And those of the Eastern tradition have not been showing very much interest in the problem of the *content* of Christian dogmas.

I would like to focus on one problem, the solving of which will likely decide our understanding of God as Trinity, which is formulated in the Christian tradition according to various social and political realities, more specifically, the reality of human relations. In other words, the implications of the teaching of the Trinity, that Kallistos spoke so clearly about, hinge in large measure upon how we interpret the paradoxical elements some allege exist in the dogma of the Trinity. How the logic goes, determines how the paradoxical is resolved.

I would like to begin with a citation of a credible, and, I think, well-known Orthodox theologian, John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon. In his work, *Truth and Communication*, he draws attention to a certain undecidedness, which he thinks exists in the Christian understanding of *existence*, and its role in Christian ontology, particularly as we think about formulations about God and his being in relationship. He writes: “There is still the question whether or not *being in relation* (*inakivnost*) has some sort of relationship to ontology, in the divine ontological picture. That is, can we speak of God as being *one*, and at the same time affirm that he is *in relation*? Or is our ontology here wholly tied to the idea of *totality*, or to *totality as wholeness* in such a way as to rule out *being in relation*? In another place, we read: “Does the oneness of God mean *one* in an arithmetical sense, or does the *oneness* mean a *form of wholeness*? Do such things as relational substance exist?” In a significant way, this remains an open question. That is, the Church has not provided an authoritative map for such concepts that satisfies the inquiring, sometimes troubled mind of the believer.

These questions concern our theological ontology, and the teaching of the Church on the Trinity faces this problem because the dogma in question involves ontological sorts of claims, some of which are viewed by some as generating philosophical worries. Depending upon what sort of being in relation (*inakovnost*) is allowed will in large measure rest on the meaning that is attached to existence or being, and the notion of *being in relation*. Hence our ontological picture is pivotal to our religious claims regarding the issue in question. I think that theology is called upon to answer this question and propose a helpful solution so as to satisfy the philosophical mind on matters relating to ontology, even though such a proposal may not find its roots in the

Christian tradition. That is, we are asking a question relating to ontological claims that possibly were not envisioned by the Fathers, and so there is no authoritative response mapped out for the believer. And in fact, some of the discussion will more than likely delve into discourse that is not friendly to or compatible with the Christian tradition, partly because much of the contemporary metaphysical and ontological discourse that occurs seldom considers religious ontology, often because it is not thought to be relevant.

Metropolitan John, had a concern regarding the question: "Can being in relation (*inakovnost*) be an ontological category?" He answers it in the positive, turning to the Church's teaching on the Trinity. It is this dogma that allows us to say that "*to be* and *to be in relation to*" is the same thing.

Bishop Kallistos in his report critically spoke of certain modern discourses that have tried to explain the notion of *identity* (*ipostas*) when speaking of the members of the Trinity. Some, he opined, should be taken with a grain of salt. Some have said that identity (*ipostas*) is to be understood as *a method of existence* (which is now popular, even in Orthodoxy) as when we have the expression, *methods of existence* (*tropos yparxeos*), such as we find in Maximus the Confessor's writings. But note that it does not mean here that the definition in question is limited to that representation of identity. That is because *methods of existence* cannot love each other, but identities (*ipostasi*, identities in the plural) can. This expression, *methods of existence*, which is often used in Orthodox theology, is not the definition of *ipostas*. The point of the expression is that the broad divine essence is realized only through the mode of the identity in question. The key of this view is that in the teachings of the Trinity, such discourses should distinguish between a *primary identity* over against a *single nature*. It's impossible to say that *ipostasi* can be rooted in one general nature, meaning that this nature exists and realizes itself through its identity, that with regard to unity, divinity as unity is *ipostasis*, or as it has been said already by Metropolitan Filaret, "The Three—ipostasis of God."

But on the other side, there exists another danger: the danger of one extreme over the other. The classic interpretation of the Trinity, given by the Greek Fathers in their use of two ontological categories *ousia* and *hypostasis* (in an epoch when the word *ipostas* didn't yet have its own personal identity) is an interpretation that assumes absolute balance. And there exists the danger of crossing from one understanding of the Trinity, the *unity* of Divinity, to the opposite, of a certain multiplicity, or *threeness* of Divinity. In other words, there exists the problem of relating the *ipostalogical*, or identity—concern to the natural. This problem concerns as much the understanding of God as trinity as much as understanding human existence.

Here I would like to make a few references to the Continental philosophical tradition, since the problem is also a philosophical one. Two of the great philosophers of the past century, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin

Heidegger, in their pseudo-correspondence discussed the life of humans and their nature. In this case we meet with two opposing views on the issue.

In his manifesto *Existentialism is Humanism*, Sartre claims that he rejects the notion of there being a human nature. He says the following: "...it is impossible to find a universal substance which could be called human nature...modern thinkers speak of conditions for human existence, and not of their nature." He adds: "...we can speak of general qualities of humans, which are not given in advance, but are constantly created." For Sartre, single existence is "existence, having chosen its essence." This creature is lonely, wandering at the edge of despair in this almost senseless world, trying to hold upmost his uniqueness.

Keeping in mind the triadological paradigm, it's possible to say that we have here identity, or *ipostas*, but no *essence*, or *nature*. There is no ontological category which would go with a *general existence* of human *ipostasi*.

If we turn to Sartre's opponent, Heidegger, we have an existentialist with a completely different outlook, where everything turns out in reverse. Heidegger has no separate human identity. A human is secondary, because he is completely unthinkable outside of the basic ontological understanding—Existence. The understanding of human identity for Heidegger is as follows: "...a human belongs to its essence only because he hears the demands of Existence... Standing in the light of existence called the existentialism of a person...identity blocks existentialism." Here again we see an analogue of the Greek understanding of *extasis*, but in a new light—completely without identity. The person, along with God, is *being* rather than *Existence*.

In this case, keeping in mind the triadological paradigm, there is existence without the *ipostasis* of existence. I think that these two philosophical views represent extremes: the extreme of *identity* and the extreme of *totality* where identity is absorbed into the whole.

And now I would like to bring up a philosopher of the next generation. I have in mind Emmanuel Levinas, who created an independent concept. John Zizioulas in the last quotation above refers to Levinas' book, *Totality and the Infinite*. The force of this book lies in the fact that from one point it tries to be ontology, but from the other ontology has an ethical measurement. The main problem for the author is to show that *inakivnost* is an event concerning existence, or ontology.

Levinas writes: "Totality and the understanding of existence, or ontology, are not existence's last secret. Religion, where the relationship between the Wholly One and the Other exists contrary to the Whole—the idea of Infinity—is the highest structure." He adds, "The radically Other (*Autre*)—is *Autri*. The collective *we* or *you* is not a plural *I*."

Here is something of a theological attempt to give an understanding of *ipostas* or identity, in a trinitarian God. But because the image of the

trinitarian God is an image in which humans were created, the understanding in question is a key to existence of the divine and human.

I quoted Levinas to show that what he says could be of interest to theology here. Of course, the Trinity does not figure in his thinking. But an understanding of the Trinity comes from looking at a total Trinity to a Trinity in relation to the other. This is perhaps a paradox. But the lack of understanding is permissible, here, since transcending understanding is one of the qualities of God. He is after all transcendent. The issue here is proof of the distance which exists between the Creator and his creation. But we are called to see God not only negatively (apophatically), but also positively (cataphatically).

The main idea of Levinas is, if the *other* and *I* are the *other* of the other, then the relationship between *me* and the *Other* cannot be united into a whole, since this would break or destroy the distance or distinction between them. This approach not only reminds me of the problem of the Trinity in relatedness, but helps to shed new light on the teaching. This is important, because in Christian theology the view of a single God is still dominant. It increases in the mystical sense, but still affirms individuality. Bishop Kallistos reminded us of that, when he said that everywhere there should be a "paradigm of others," which are separate, but are together in love. Thus reading Levinas, we could be brought closer to making sense of this paradox.

The formula of Levinas *The Existent comes before Existence*, reminds us of the Greek Fathers, who say that God's unity is realized only through *ipostas*, but there is also a certain multiplicity which is the mode of that unity. The formula of Metropolitan Zizilous, *Being* and *Being in relation to* is the same thing, and gives expression to the conviction of the Greek Fathers, who formulated in an authoritative way the doctrine of the Trinity. According to them, no nature exists in naked form, but always has a mode of existence (*tropos yparxeos*). In other words, nature is always *ipostasis*.

Let's turn to the world and human existence. Imagine the cosmos as a whole unit, because that is how it really is. Identity doesn't exist on its own. This provides an analogy for thinking about the threeness of God, in whose image humanity was made. It is of course a weak analogy, since all people could die as a result of an atomic blast, but the world would continue to exist. But according to the Scriptures, the world is made for humans to dwell in.

Through the above, working with a Christian understanding of triadic relations, we can interpret identity, *ipostas*, as a relative understanding, an ontological one. In this case, it is impossible to write off *ipostas* as exhausted by the common meaning of human identity. The will, and other topics of distinction, are principle bearers of independent identities. But for a more conservative (Orthodox) theology, this would be unthinkable, if we have in mind the Church and the faces (persons) of God and the Trinity. So the definition of identity that has currency in modern psychology and sociology

cannot work for the theological issues and distinctions we have been discussing.

In my view, the solution to the main question—is *ipostasnost inakopvnos*—depends not only on the theoretical thinking of Christians, but also upon their political views. And their political views and understanding will depend in large measure upon the paradigm of the Trinity I have been expounding.

I quoted a number of non-Christian philosophers to show that as a point of view concerning the world, it has not just a theoretical, but practical consequence. That which I am about to say can be thought to be an exaggeration, nevertheless I urge the reader to pay close attention.

Is there a link between the political position of the philosophers referred to and their philosophy? Could it be that Heidegger's Nazism is tied to the ontology he prescribes? Or Sartre's almost anarchist political views to his ontology of identity?

And could the philosophy of Levinas be tied to his experiences in the German prisons, and his Judaism? Levinas' views underlie the ethical treatment of the Other. There always exists a distance from the Other. It is a distance which is a link, since the distance is *existence*. Does the fact that the ethical element is primary, which serves as primary for Levinas not show an affinity in his thinking to a Christian approach to ontology? Let us remember the position offered of God by John the Theologian: God is love (1 John 4:16).

I brought up examples concerning secular philosophy, but the same is true for Christians. In part, it touches upon how Orthodox Christians in Russia determine their political position. Will they, believing in the Trinity, be drawn to totalitarianism? Or will their faith in the Trinity lead them to see in others the Other, which is the manifestation of identity, *inakovnost*. This also is a question for missions, having to do with a missionary's treatment of the Other—and the other person, who is at the same time a unit of oneself, through the image of God, but in other ways also completely different.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN THE CULTURE AND ART OF ANCIENT RUSSIA¹

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The conception of the Trinity has been one of the most wonderful achievements of Christian theological and philosophical thought. It is based on earlier conceptions of Trinitarian being and thought. The theme of the Trinity has been one of the most important concepts in Medieval Russia since the XIVth century. This is especially manifest in the “monk’s cause” of Sergei Radonezsky and in the icon art of Andrei Rublev. In the famous icon of Andrei Rublev, theological, philosophical and aesthetic principles have been genuinely united. The Trinity concept is connected with the ideas of man as three parts (spirit, soul and body), the doctrine of Moscow as the Third Rome, and other ideas of Medieval Russia which have found their reflection in various phenomena of culture, both verbal and nonverbal.

Let me call the genre of my presentation an oral discourse, or if you wish, some sort of Socratic monologue, that presupposes an inner dialogue on the subject in question. The theme is not accidental; it is addressed to the period of Ancient Russia, which is considered to be the highest point or spiritual peak in the history of Russian culture. Now we can undergo a second Christianization, by just looking at the patterns which guide the creators of newly erected churches, icon-paintings and frescoes which were used for the decoration of temples. They neither imitate the heavy-styled academic painting of the Nineteenth Century, nor the *courtoise* paintings of the Eighteenth Century or gay style of the Seventeenth, but rather the lofty spirited paintings of Andrei Rublev, Daniel the Black, Dionysius and their successors. It was the time of the highest spiritual apogee and we will always have an inclination to turn to it. In my opinion the Mediaeval period has turned out to be the pinnacle of Western culture. Particularly when one is reminded of the magnificent Gothic cathedrals, which organized in magnificent ways the centers of old European cities. Then there are also the

internal accents, the mighty sounds of organs, symbolizing ascension to Heaven. That is why it is so important for us to turn to the Mediaeval era, although perhaps it was a ruthless and austere time. The more austere life was on one side, the more merciful, spirited and compassionate it was on the other.

Although the Ancient Russian period embraces practically a limitless source of ideas, I would like to touch on a select number of them. The famous Russian philosopher Leo Shestov in his last book *Athens and Jerusalem*, published in 1938, said that there are two poles of the ancient world: Athens as a center of ancient civilization with a Hellenistic type of thinking, and Jerusalem the sacred capital of the Eastern Mediterranean area. It seemed to Shestov that these two so drastically different worlds cannot ever be reconciled. To my mind he was mostly right. Perhaps Byzantium and Christendom have generally speaking achieved a synthesis, i.e., they have successfully reconciled the religious truth of the East which we discover in the Old Testament, and the lofty philosophizing of the West, which one can see in the tradition of Hellenistic philosophy.

A few words should be said at this juncture. Greek culture is not absolutely a western one. It is the culture that emerged as the interplay of civilizations: Greek people were not only Argonauts looking for material values, there have certainly been spiritual Argonauts open to the achievements of Eastern–Mediterranean *oikoumene*, which they creatively remodeled and adjusted for their usage.

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the accomplishments of Christian theology and philosophy. It has evolved neither accidentally nor has it fallen down from heaven. If we begin to regard other ancient cultures, then we discover that the number *three*, the notion concerning triadicity, trichotomy or threefoldness of being, is common to many cultures. Strictly speaking this archetypal number is present almost everywhere and in particular in our thinking, in our epistemology or in efforts to edify some theory or to get a solid foundational idea. If one, *unum*, represents the world as a simple unity, that is a primitive perception of the world, and two shows the binary, dichotomy, duality or twosome which divides the world, producing sets of oppositions, then triad represents the optimum vision of plurality, reduced to trinity; and in its attitude to oneness, appears to be plural in which one and plural are co-present. As old Russian authors put it, here we have a “tripod of thought” which allows us to order the spiritual, intellectual, informative continuum, in the same manner as a three–legged chaldron has proved to be a real support for real things.

Christian thinking rose to the highest levels of understanding through a trinitarian structure of being. The same is true as well of attitudes toward others dear and significant for the Christian consciousness of things. For instance, the cross existed in different cultures before Christianity, but it was

the latter that raised it to such a height. The notion of sacrifice was known long before Christianity, as we find it reflected in many religions. But a redeeming and salvific sacrifice in the Christian sense appears to be the highest explication of the notion of sacrifice in general.

Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity, elements of which we encounter in many cultures, and in the Old Testament, has been promoted in the New Testament. It is quite possible to demonstrate how, in the Old Testament, the idea of trinity is yet hardly shining, and how it preexists in biblical prophecies, and in equal measure amidst the ancient thinkers of the West. And all the stages of development of the idea are visible through Old Testament history. In Genesis, the patriarch Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, represent, according to a biblical interpretation of world history, the whole of the human race. The original concept of ancient philosophy of history (historiosophy) embraced future time. The trinitarian principle was seen as the basis of the differentiation of civilizations, each with a three-staged pattern of growth, and three causes for existence. So this trinitarian motif turns out to be unchangeably present in Christian consciousness until the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. In the book of Genesis we read that three angels made a visitation to Abraham, the pivotal event for the subject of "Old Testament Trinitarian thinking." We shall speak later on about this. In Exodus we read that in the third month after leaving Egypt the Jews approached the mountain of Sinai; and on the third day Moses ascended Sinai to receive the commandments from God. Later, we read that the sons of Israel wept for Moses for thirty days. A similar notion of trinity and its modifications were constantly and consistently appeared in the Old Testament record.

I will not say anything about the New Testament, because it suffices to mention that both of the fragments taken from the New Testament, and the central dogma of Christianity, and recurrent recollections about the Holy Trinity, all make it unnecessary to recite at length the explanations and affirmations about the subject in question.

Concerning the veneration of the Holy Trinity in Ancient Russia, it is sufficient to say that the first church with the name *Trinity* was built in Paskov. In historical science one can find many different and sometimes contradictory accounts of the erection of the temple, but it is not our task to manage these problems here. The main thing is that northern Russia was mystically enlightened by the Holy Trinity, and this played a profound part in our history. One more church bearing the name *Trinity* was built in the Gleden monastery near Velikii Ustiug. Today it is a small town in the Vologodsky region. It was prosperous until the period of Peter the Great.

In the Fourteenth Century the idea of *Trinity* became more and more influential, if not absolutely dominant in the Moscow area. The best written testimony of the veneration of the Trinity was the *Life of St. Sergius of Radonezh*, composed by Epifanii the Wise. The following are a few lines

from it: "Glory to God for everything, and for each deed whereby the magnificent and *trisagion* Name will always be praised! Glory to God in the Highest, and glory to the Trinity, Who is the hope, light and our life; we believe in Him, for in Him we were baptized, through Him we live, and, act and exist! Three times the baby cried out from his mother's womb, and the priest Michael said that the baby will be the chosen vessel of God, the dwelling place and servant of the Holy Trinity." Then the author continues: "Everywhere the number three is considered to be the principle of Goodness and stimulus for threefold vociferation." Three times God summoned the prophet Samuel, with three stones from the sling of David, Goliath was slain, three days and three nights Jonah the Prophet spent in the belly of a whale, at the age of thirty Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan river, three disciples were at Favor, and the Lord was transfigured before them, in three days He was raised from the dead. After the historical arguments, Epifam turned to an ontological one: Why am I speaking about the number three, and not recalling the more magnificent and fearful things about the Triune Godhead of the Holy Trinity? It is interesting to note that, as if repeating an old principle, the father of St. Sergius had three sons: Steven, Peter and Varfolomey. The last one assumed the name Sergius.

The notion of *Trinity* has been actualized in monastic life, through service to the Fatherland and the building of monasteries. Fortunately we know much about the iconic expression of the image of the Trinity, that has been successfully preserved until our time, which were hidden by the later layers of dyes, by metal coverings (oklady), but finally recovered at the start of the Twentieth Century. One is the famous icon of *Troitsa* [*Trinity*] by Andrei Rublev. This masterpiece represents the harmony and genius of composition by which the artist was able to unite lofty spiritual, theological, philosophical and aesthetical principles. The sacrament of the Eucharist and the image of the created cosmos are presented in this masterpiece magnificently. If we look at this icon (it seems to me to be the best visual representation of the dogma of the Holy Trinity, not only in Orthodoxy, but in all Christendom) then we can see how deep, pithy and absolutely perfect the work of the great master is.

In this masterpiece, we see spherical composition, the image of the universe, reflecting the global character which was present in the works of the ancient Greeks. We see the image of the chalice, which is center to the composition. The chalice symbolizing the Eucharist is placed upon the table. We see three angels, the left representing the Almighty One (Sabbaoth), God the Father, and above Him we see the symbol of a house, or city. It is a sheer architectural backstage signifying the house of Abraham who received the three angels, hence it is a symbolic designation of the Divine Economy. According to Mediaeval semantics the house, temple, or city are denotations of the organized, ordered and sacred being. That is why the mediaeval cities are so beautiful in both old Russia and the West. And the reason for this lies

in the sacral image which they represent. In a similar way we may contemplate ancient icons and carvings.

In the center of the composition we see the Savior, God the Son, the Divine Logos. His symbolic image, the tree, is placed over Him. This is the primordial archetype, the Tree of Life, or the Tree of Knowledge in the Old Testament, and the Cross in the New Testament. On the right side we see the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Paraclete, the symbol of which is the mountain, the image of ascension to the Heavens, *Sursum corde*, as expressed in the Liturgy, referring the upward movement from earth to the celestial, from below to the sublime. Here we see represented in artistic splendor the concise content of the *Troitsa*, to which so many works were dedicated, that is the wonderful treatises of theologians, art critics and historians.

Before the disclosure and development of the profound theological essence of the *Troitsa* took place, we had plain illustrative images which we find in the early icons, describing mostly the Old Testament story about the three angels which came to visit Abraham and Sarah. Later we see the continuation of the same illustrative motif. Rublev had a lot of imitators, and because of this the *sui generis* devaluation of the image occurred. For instance, instead of a simple table with only a chalice on it, other meals and utensils are added. The three symbols correlated to the three Hypostasis of the One God are often replaced by many additional images which darken the main idea of the icon. Thus if we regard the subject of Old Testament Trinity in its totality, from outset until modern times, we cannot deny that Rublev's *Troitsa* is a true consummation of the creative effort to convey the trinitarian nature of the Godhead through aesthetic, visual and symbolic means.

Before us [see Figure 1, next page] we have a short illustration of our story. Everyone has a booklet with the program of our conference. Please give your attention to the kind of design we have on the cover page. It immediately presents itself to our visual sensibilities. The elongated frame comes in view. One might begin to explain the symbolism by appeal to the general format of the program. But look at the symbol of the Cross. It has been moved to the right as if it belongs to the Holy Spirit, and that is incorrect. And then there are but two symbols instead of three, the image of the mountain is dropped. Although beneath the foot of the mountain we can see the lines, the motivation of the artist isn't clear. In reality it is not a part of the decorum, but the symbolical delineation of a mountain has been placed in the upper part of the icon.

All three angels are painted with cross-wise *nimbi* [radiances], which clearly goes against the tradition which prescribes a nimbus to the middle angel only, i.e. to the Savior. It is not that I should like to diminish the value of the picture. It is highly unlikely that the author of our picture has been guided by ulterior motives. And though I have a readiness to suppose the



Figure 1 *The Holy Trinity* (1411) of Andrei Rublev (1360/70-1430 A.D.), Monastery of the Trinity-St. Sergius, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

opposite, the fact is modern interpreters easily stray from authentic and correct visions of the lofty meaning of Rublev's *Troitsa*.

In the art of Ancient Rus', in addition to the Old Testament *Troitsa*, was a very popular and New Testament version of it, with God the Father as noble Altman, the Son as a middle-aged man and the Holy Spirit as a dove. So we see there are many different configurations of this composition: some in the form of an equilateral triangle, or in vertical order. The Russian many-layered iconostasis, until the Sixteenth Century, was the typical icon placed in the highest part of the picture, together with the Forefather's circle, which pictured Adam, Eve, Noah and others as the beginners of human history. And amidst them the icon of the New Testament Trinity is displayed, as a paradigm of development for all human history. There are others of similar design as well. However it goes beyond my concern here to discuss them in detail. There are examples of *Troitsa* with many scenes (some with twenty-five) displayed along the perimeter of the icon, representing the period from the creation of the earth according the book of Genesis, to the punishment of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, representing dwelling places disgusting to God. Some present three cups on the table, along with the composition of a middle angel with stretched wings, with a diagonal view of a table as a tomb, under which may appear a scene from the apocrypha about the revitalization of the Calf, a prototype of the coming Resurrection. An impressive image of a New Testament Trinity was destroyed, but a new one has been placed under the vaults of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow.

A few words are in order about high Russian iconostasis in which the image of the New Testament Trinity plays a central part. If the Western Latin genius, Thomas Aquinas produced a verbal image of Christian doctrine in the *Summa Theologia*, then Russian high iconostasis might be similarly esteemed as a sublime visual, aesthetic analogy or *sui generis* Russian Orthodox *Summa Theologia*. The parallelism between these two works is suggested by some Western scholars.² In these works, the iconostasis presents a person entering the church with much more than the main principles of Christian belief, it opens the whole of human history from our forefathers and prophets until the Gospel events, moreover, there is a look into the future (in the composition of *Deisis*) where one can see the Last Judgement. One is connected thereby with local saints, in the underlining row of an iconostasis. That kind of concentration in one visually embracing image of world history, first in general, then in detail, comprises a unique creation of ancient Rus' theology.

Just imagine that somewhere in the North of Russia, in a distant village piled high with snow, common peasants, attending church, were able to see the most significant paradigms of world history, Christian doctrine and human salvation simply by beholding the iconostasis. It was such a concentration of hiddenness, covered and expressed in aesthetic form, that makes such creations almost both incredible and inimitable. That is why the destruction of

churches in the territory of Russia after the October revolution turned out to be not only an act of desacralization, but also a degradation of its people, especially the peasantry.

The trinitarian principle is seemingly omnipresent, and among others it can be seen in the church building structure: the porch, central part (*trapeznaya*) and altar. It is understood as a way of ascension to the highest: through the porch, as a beginning of the church, then through the central part from which one can see the altar and the Holy of Holies, which is accessible only to worshipping priests.

In Russia the idea of Trinity has taken on a lot of different incarnations. It is not merely theological exegesis expressed by non-verbal means, but also a concrete reaction to the heresies of anti-trinitarians, calling for the unification of Rus', i.e., in an explicit manner social and political meaning is represented, because for St. Sergius the order of the land, state and government was of no less importance than the ministry of Christ. This (idea of Trinity) plays the part of high moral inspiration, because through the contemplation of the Holy Trinity the hated feuds and fears of peoples of different social strata and tribes were thereby excised. Thanks to the salvific action of the Holy Trinity, Rus' has withstood the most difficult periods of its existence and won the battle at Kulicovo's field.

The image of Trinity also conveys a profound anthropological sense. Christian doctrine, at variance with modernity, which confounds the soul and spirit, made a clear distinction among the three main elements: body, soul and spirit. Body, flesh or *soma* was viewed as the material substratum. The soul or *psyche* played the part of an individual psychological principle, expressing the idea of physical individuality but through the emotions—affections and passions. Spirit, or *pneuma*, appeared to be the highest spiritual principle, which subordinates and orders human nature. The soul in its turn is divided into three parts, as was taught by Metropolitan Niceforos in his epistle to Vladimir the Monomachus on the occasion of the Great Lent. It wasn't a simple correspondence between two persons, it was an epistle from the head of the Church to the head of State. It included very significant instructive content. Metropolitan Niceforos singled out, according to Greek teaching, three parts of the soul: (1) the noetical, logical, lofty, divine; (2) the affectionate, emotional, orgiastic, Dionysian; (3) the willful principle, appetitive one. And he uses an image, certainly unknown in Rus', a transplant from the Ancient Hellenic tradition, i.e., the image of a chariot, where the driver represents the word, and two horses, the horse of desire and horse of affection. We can see in it imagery resembling that appearing in the *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo* and other dialogues of Plato.³

It is important to note that Rus' works devoted to the Trinity are widely known. They have had a drastically different character. Besides the icons mentioned above, and metal coverings and decorations, there are mosaics,

frescoes, and reliefs in white stone, as we see in St. George's Cathedral in Uriev, Polsky. There are medallions on the golden gates of the Nativity of Christ at Suzdal, and *panagiois* (*bishops pectoral images*), book miniatures, sacred vessels *et cetera*. When the Holy Trinity prevails in peoples' minds, they creatively actualize it in a vast variety of ways and works, in their thoughts and acts. They project it from their consciousness, where it prevails in all aspects of their being.

The image of Trinity underlies all of ancient Russian consciousness, old Russian culture and the old Russian world-view. One of its manifestations may be said to suggest the doctrine of "Moscow the *third* Rome." It is a well-known doctrine, and though there are many and various interpretations of it, I would like to turn to one, which in my opinion, is the most substantial of all. The concept of *Roma aeterna* (Eternal Rome) is not of course the product of Russian hegemonies, but according to some there was (and is) an attempt of Russia to enter the political, legal and historical universe of Europe. Its beginning is marked by Ivan the Third in the Fifteenth Century. It wasn't Peter I who turned Russia toward Europe. It wasn't his father, Alexei Mikhailovich, who loved the Polish culture, but *Ivan III*, under whose reign the southern influence from the Byzantine Empire was halted. It happened after the siege of Constantinople in 1453.

The southern influence on Russian history and even on the whole of European was considered to be dominant, and extended to all ancient civilizations in the South. The light of civilization, and later the light of the Christian faith, came from the south to the north. Conversion took place during the time of Ivan III, who married Sophy Paleolog, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, who introduced the two-headed eagle, an imitation not only of Byzantine times but of the Sacred Roman empire of the Hapsburgs as well. He invited Italian masters from the former, *First Rome* to raise the *Third Rome* on the seven hills of Moscow (*Muscovy*). The Moscow Kremlin is the most impressive architectural manifestation of the concept, *Moscow is the Third Rome*, wherein Russian and European principles are assembled in unity, revealing a mighty state of magnificent grandeur.⁴

Thus, we can see in ancient Rus' varied interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity in the fields of theology, politics, visual art and aesthetics. It is not my intention here to expand further on the later development of the doctrine. I would only like to note that Ancient Rus' legacy was invariably present through Russian history and culture whatsoever our response toward it may be: with indifference as it was in the Eighteenth Century, or with adoration during the age of the Slavophiles, or perniciousness as it was during the revolution, or again with euphoria such as we find today. We don't have an alternative for our cultural basis, for Ancient Rus' is for us, according to the saying of academician Lichachev, our past, our ground, our foundation. By way of summation I would like to add that Ancient Rus' is not something

isolated from the European cultural domain, it has close ties with both the Byzantine and European scene, moreover it is certainly not free of Eastern influence.

In conclusion I should like to propose the idea that might well generate considerable debate, but I think it is a worthy subject for further discussion. It is my belief that the division of Christianity into three streams: Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism has turned out to be not so much the result of human action as much as it is of Divine providence, in order that through these three its hypostasis, the fullness of Christianity might be realized. If Orthodoxy lays emphasis upon the ascetical, mystical, monastic, noetic, prayer, then Catholicism tries to establish the Universal church through spiritual Rome, which restates in spiritual space the first Rome, where the Pope of Rome appeared as the *maximus pontifex* equal to the Roman caesar. And his monastic orders serve as legions defending the existing system. Protestantism, in my opinion, expresses the counter-balancing power to the coming-from-above hierarchy and represents the ascending movement from beneath that restores the spirit of early communities, turning to the Holy Spirit, who is omnipresent. And I think that all our controversies, arguments, and disagreements are on close inspection, small and meaningless when compared to the immensity of Divine grace revealed to us in the Holy and Life-giving Trinity.

NOTES

¹ The author uses the expression *Ancient Rus'* for *Ancient Russia*, hence it will appear now and then in the article.

² See Conrad Onash, *Medieval Russian Culture*, 1984, p. 186.

³ *Epistles of Mitre*. Niceforos, M., 2000.

⁴ Kudriavtsev M. P. Moskva, *tretii Rim.*, M. 1994

A TRIADOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHURCH MISSION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Our current understanding of the Mission of the Church as *Missio Dei*, as the mission of salvation of the world, and the mission of the Holy Trinity, helps us acknowledge the need for a triadological perspective. This is quite natural for Orthodox theology. The experience of taking God as a Trinity has been fixed in Orthodox liturgical texts everywhere.

The priority of theological education and theology as a science in the case of realizing *Missio Dei* in Russia should be given a priority also in missiology. The triadological perspective and prospect in missiology lets us identify priorities regarding Church activities, and helps make us aware of our attitude toward the most divers challenges: secularization and globalization, and religious fundamentalism all of which produce aggression. New technological dangers in biology and physics generate social and political conflicts, etc. The missiology of today also raises the question of the need for a Christ-centered triadological approach to culture.

A triadological perspective allows us to have a full awareness of the mission of the Church [here I have in mind the Orthodox Church] and understand its present uniqueness. The key word in the title is *church*. Strictly speaking, any ecclesiological discourse has to be a triadological one.

THE CHURCH

There is no really satisfactory and final definition of the notion *Church*. It is evident that none work, neither the definition of Metropolitan Filaret of Moscow which states, "The Church is established by God as a society of people united by the Orthodox faith, and includes the Law of God, the

hierarchy and sacraments,”¹ nor modified definitions of the following sort: “The Church is that society of people that retain the true religion, and believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer of humankind.”² The second definition might be acceptable in some measure, but it still isn’t fully adequate. For the most part, the Holy Fathers didn’t spend their time formulating definitions, but instead offered in the same manner what the Savior and apostles did, helpful graphic images, such as for example, *the bride of Christ, the tree of life, the ship of salvation, the Father’s house, et cetera*).

It is in principle impossible to give a final definition of *Church*, mainly because it constitutes a great mystery, the *Church* is a *mystical body*. And while the preceding involves an equivalence, the second term includes a mysterious element that defies definition. An idea of V.V. Bolotov expressed many years ago now, may be viewed as applying to the definition given by Metr. Filaret. Such a definition “cannot be called a satisfactory one, because it is a mere abstraction of the traits of the Church as she represents herself in the history that follows her early inception, whereas one needs a definition of *Church* as she represents herself at the very beginning of her being.”³ V.V. Bolotov proposes that we give attention to the etymology of the various terms that designate *Church* in different languages, giving special attention to the very beginnings, as they are recorded in the New Testament. Our attention needs to be on the notion of *ecclesia* found in the New Testament, because that is the place where the Church’s history begins, and so that is where this inquiry should begin. And if one has this as a starting point, one will discover “Church as a community where each member is called to lawful participation in the common, collective life.”⁴ The Greek word *ecclesia*, often translated *church* also has the meanings *gathering, calling out*. According to historical sources the primitive church included many people of Asia, Africa and Europe. The Church (*Ecclesia tou Christou*, Mt. 16, 18) is that community founded by Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. Following the apostle Paul and the Holy Fathers, many theologians offer figurative expressions as a means for expressing their personal experiences of the Church. Some include, *Kingdom of God on earth, Body of Christ, inspired by the Holy Ghost, it is a way of Church self-awareness*.⁵

According to Sergei Bulgakov the “Church is a new life with Christ and in Christ, moved by the Holy Spirit.”⁶ God became a man and then disciples, apostles and later on all believers in His name would become participants of that theanthropical (Godmanhood) life. Jesus Christ has resurrected and ascended to heaven, but these events do not mean that He left humankind. Our life in the Church is a hidden one in Christ. Unfortunately, sometimes we are not worthy of this Name.

The event of the Incarnation which was accomplished in time, has the enduring power of eternity, and that persisting Incarnation is the Church, the

Body of Christ, according to the apostle Paul (Eph. 1, 22–23). However Christ is not simply the divine Person as such, for His proper life is inseparable from the life of the Holy Trinity, and He is “One of the Holy Trinity.” His life is united and consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, therefore the Church viewed as life in Christ is *eo ipso* a life also in the Holy Trinity. The Church as the Body of Christ takes part in the inner Trinitarian divine Love”: and some day we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14, 23).

Through the Church human nature attains access to divine life. Unity with Christ is thereby a *churching*. The churching of the human race in the Body of Christ is not yet fully accomplished through the single event of Incarnation, or this coupled with the Resurrection. What was yet necessary was the condescension of the Holy Spirit and the events of Pentecost which were consummating events for the Church. The Holy Spirit in the form of fiery tongues came down to the world and rested upon the apostles. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are now in the world and were given so as to be with it.

According to the Church Fathers, eternal life, which is granted to us by Christ and the meaning of which is the knowledge of God, (“That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” Jn. 17, 3) begins here in temporal life as we know it; and this eternity in time is a presence of divine life in the Church, which we see quantitatively as a living *e pluribus unum*, one wholeness of life in multitude. The Church is universal (*sobornaya*) according to the likeness of the divine triunity. During the daily celebrations of liturgy and before the performance of the mystery of the Eucharist, the Church addresses a “divided humankind in which each individual leads his separate, self-centered life”: Therefore we are enjoined, “Let us love one another and through one-mindedness confess the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It is through the eyes of love that one can see the unity of the Church, moreover not as an external union or gathering, but as a mysterious primary basis of human life. Humankind is united in Christ—each man/woman is an offspring of one and the same vine, each a member of this one body. The individual life of each person influences without limit the lives of others, and each person in the Church lives the life of an all en-churched humanity, appearing in the totality of the human race. And it is not that humanity expresses itself only through living persons, but also through those who have died in Christ, since in God and in the Church there is no difference between the quick and the dead, for in God everyone is a living person, because “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Mt. 22, 32).

All of creation, the world and nature, submit to the care of angels and to the supremacy of humankind, which share a destiny with the rest of creation: as Paul says, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for

our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8, 22–23). Thus in the Church, the life of man is united with the life of all creation by ties of cosmic love.

The Church is the eternal foundational goal for the entire creation, for the sake of the Church God made the world, and in a sense the Church "was created first of all,...and for Her sake the world was created."⁷ The Lord created man after His image, but the image—the living God-likeness yet contains in itself the goal and possibility of the churching of man, as well as the Incarnation, for God could assume the nature of such a being which bears a similitude to Him, i.e., bears His image in himself (man). Through the living *e pluribus unum* of humankind shines the church *e pluribus unum* according to the image of the Holy Trinity. When the Lord spoke to man and communicated with him it was the beginning of the primitive church. After the Fall (Gen. 3, 15), the Lord by His promise established what may be called, *the Old Testament Church*, which turned out to be the school for God–man communication. Even in the obscurity of paganism we find a natural striving for God, or as the hymwriter put it, *the heathen fruitless church*. And after the Incarnation as recorded in the New Testament, only then did the Church attain a fulness of being, and in this sense and way we may say that the Church was founded by Jesus Christ and actualized through Pentecost. However, through this event the foundation of the Church was laid, but not yet completely fulfilled. She still needs to undergo the transformation from a militant to triumphant church, in which "God will be all in all."

The contrast of *invisible Church* with *visible human society* is contrary to a proper understanding of the scope of the Church. This sort of thinking is detrimental to what *Church* stands for, and at the same time fails to see the Church as the unity of created and divine orders. However if the Church as alive is present in the terrestrial church, then *eo ipso* it follows that the terrestrial church, as embracing everything here on earth, has its position in space and time. Being present to and with society, and when properly functioning, neither intrudes in society's affairs nor determines herself by society's standards. Yet the Church continues to exist as an ecclesiastical society with its unique traits, laws and boundaries. She is for us and in us, in our earthly and temporal being, with her own history, as far as everything in this world belongs to history. Thus the eternal, immovable and divine being of the Church in this temporal age is presented as an historical disclosure and fulfilment, and hence has its historical origin.

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ Who determined that the cornerstone for this foundation be the confession of faith of the apostle Peter, which was offered by him on behalf of all the apostles. They have been sent by Christ to preach the *ecclesia*, the Church, which has received the New Testament's *being* through the condescension of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. It was the first apostolic calling made through the mouth of the

apostle Peter: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2, 38). It is recorded, "And about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2, 41), and that was the beginning of the New Testament Church.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The fulfilment of the commandment of our Savior: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28, 19), meant the commencement of the apostolic mission. This commandment is to be understood not only as a call to fulfillment of the will of God, but also as endowment conferred upon the apostles of the power of God. Since that time, to become a member of the Church, i.e. in fact to be consecrated with the name *Christian* was inseparably bound with the confession accompanying the baptismal formula uttered by novices, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Later on this was incorporated in the Creed, the basis of Christian doctrine, or Christian dogmatics. Recall how priest Pavel Florensky spoke so sincerely and deeply, "What is the Christian world view? The musical unfolding of the theme which is the system of dogmatics. And what are Dogmatics? The Detailed Creed. And what is the Creed? Nothing other than grown up baptismal formula."⁸ The triadological perspective is but one possible Christian perspective for understanding the world, and our place in it, for comprehension of our spiritual experience, our behavior, i.e. our trying to understand Christian ethics. Therefore the mission was commanded by the Savior through the pronouncement of the trinitarian Name of God, but the beginning of the mission took place on the day of the condescension of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, on the day of the final revelation of the trinitarian God.

The notion *mission* needs some commentary. Traditionally it means the acquisition of new members to the Church, the preaching of the Gospel to those who still have not heard the Glad tidings. A theological dictionary printed at the beginning of the Twentieth Century offers the following definition: "Mission is the preaching of one religious doctrine to people of different beliefs."⁹ It is evident that the *theological meaning* of the notion *mission* is much deeper than this. The Old Testament role of the prophet (the first is Moses) helps us to understand what the mission of Israel was. Israelites were called to be the people of God, and this calling highlights for the whole of humanity what God intended in terms of the salvation of humanity. Through a proper understanding of this particular calling, all are called to be participants in salvation. In the theology of the Old Testament the essence of missions has yet to be disclosed. God is pictured in the Old Testament as

sending His Word to fulfil His will (Isa. 55, 11; Ps. 107, 20; 148, 5; Wisdom of Solomon 18, 14). He sends His Wisdom to help man in his works (Wisdom, 9, 10). He is also pictured as sending His Spirit to renew the face of the earth (Ps. 104, 4) and proclaim His Will to the people (Wisdom, 9, 17). These are the harbingers of the New Testament.

According to the New Testament, John the Baptist announced the coming of the greatest of all prophets, Jesus Christ. He was to the people a messenger from God, and His only desire in life was to fulfil “the will of him who sent him” (Jn. 4, 34), and “do the works of him who sent him” (Jn. 9, 4). The mission of Jesus Christ is continued by the agency and mission of the apostles, the disciples of the Savior, the circle of which is not limited by immediate disciples and adherents of Jesus. The Apostle Paul heard from the Savior: “Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles” (Acts, 22, 21). All apostles and the whole church are called to this mission. This is realized through the power of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost enters the Christian experience and consummates the revelation of the mystery of God. Thereby, the Spirit enters the history of humankind in a such a way that humans undergo an inner transformation and restoration of the image of God.

In the Twentieth Century we find dogmaticians trying to understand the mission of the Church and working to formulate a theology of mission, both of which fall under the heading, *missiology*. Previous to this development, missions had been differently conceived. Sometimes it was mainly perceived from the soteriological point of view, as salvation or rescue of separated individuals from eternal condemnation. In Europe, Christians placed an emphasis upon the spread of European culture. In this context, *missions* was viewed as a channel for civilization for peoples from distant continents. Then there is the common notion that *missions* means simply an expansion of the *Church* (or some denomination). It was also interpreted in a soteriological–historical perspective as a process by virtue of which the world would evolve through catachism, i.e., would thereby be turned into the kingdom of God. Oftentimes as a result of such theological rationalizations the inner relationship of Christology, Soteriology and Triadology suffered. The dominant issue at stake in these cases was grace. During the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, there was a slight but steady shift in the direction of understanding *missions* as Divine (*Missio Dei*).

MISSIONS AS *MISSIO DEI*

After the First World War, theologians thinking and reflecting about missions were giving more and more attention to biblical and dogmatic theology. In 1932, Karl Barth, one of the most prominent theologians in all of history, in

his presentation at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference defined *missions* as *the act of God Himself (Opus Dei)*. A few years later at another conference, the International Missionary Counsel at Tambaram (1938), a declaration of the German delegation further promoted this new understanding of missions. It was stated that only “through Divine creative actions will His Kingdom come about in the establishment of the New Heavens and the New Earth” and “we are convinced, that this eschatological stand was the only successful way to steer the Church away from secularization.”¹⁰

For the first time the idea (but not the term itself) of *Missio Dei* was explicitly formulated at the conference of the International Missionary Counsel at Billingen (1952). Under the influence of Karl Barth, the missionary was understood as a missionary partaking in God’s acts. Aside from this idea, the missionary enterprise doesn’t make much sense. It regains its proper meaning only through the agency of and sending of humans by God. Hence missionary initiative issues exclusively from God. Missions then was perceived as flowing from the very nature of God. Furthermore, it was understood in triadological perspective, versus an ecclesiological or soteriological one. Later on, the classic doctrine of *Missio Dei* concerning God the Father (sending His Son), and the Holy Spirit (viewed as proceeding from God the Father and God the Son), was supplemented by one more thesis: “Father, Son and Holy Spirit sends the Church into the world.” The connectedness with the doctrine of the Trinity turned out to be an essentially new stage for missionary thinking.¹¹ This new view of missions won out over the triumphal approach. At Billingen, “The missionary obligations of the church” underlined the close relation between *Missio Dei* and missions as an expression of solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ.

Today, many missiologists see missions as a movement of God in the world, and the Church as a tool of missions. But contrarywise, “The mission of salvation doesn’t belong to the church, this is the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, and the church is included in it.”¹² The church is for missions, not vice versa. Participation in missionary activity means co-working with God, Who sends down His love to all people, helping them to receive His love and accept its fruits.

First and foremost, this understanding of missions as *Misseo Dei* was characteristic of Protestant denominations, and only later was it assimilated by Roman Catholic missiology and Orthodoxy.¹³ *Missio Dei* is addressed to all people in every field of activity. Missions means the turning of God to the world. It is realized in ordinary human history and is not of any necessity confined to church boundaries or to a working through her. As it is said, “*Missio Dei* is wider than the mission of the Church.”¹⁴ *Missio Dei* is the realization of the Divine plan both in the Church and in the world. The incredible truth is, the Church has a privilege to take part in it all, to be a co-worker with God in missions.

The Church in its missionary activity deals with humankind and the world, and in the latter, salvation is invisibly taking place through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Through the grace of God it might well take the form of human endeavor, but the latter cannot be regarded as a mere human endeavor, because the genuine author of human history continues to be the Holy Spirit through humans.

In the Roman Catholic Church one can find traces of the conception of *Missio Dei*, in particular in the Proceedings of Vatican II (1962–1965),¹⁵ where it is emphasized that the Church by its very nature possesses a missionary character, as far as “it is founded on the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.” In the decree “On the missionary work of the Church” (*Ad gentes*), this activity is defined as the realization of God’s providence, as *Theophania* and the fulfilment of it in the world and world history.”¹⁶ Missions is determined here in terms of the categories of Triadology, Christology, Pneumatology and Ecclesiology. In the *Pastoral Constitution* concerning the situation of the Church in today’s world, “God and Hope” we find the following: “The Spirit of God, guiding through miraculous providence in the course of time and in the renewing of the face of the earth, is present in this evolution” (It means the renewal of minds and broad changes in society).

As far as Protestant missiology is concerned, the widening of the notion of *missions* and the understanding that it is *Missio Dei*, took such a radical turn that it was extended even to the point of a readiness to exclude participation of the church. The concept of *Missio Dei* contributed to the strong conviction that neither the Church nor any other human institution or group could be regarded as the initiator or the carrier of missions. First of all and in the last resort missions is nothing less than the action of the Triune God, the Creator, Redeemer and the Source of Holiness for the world, and a service in which the Church has a privilege to participate. Missions stream from the very heart of God. In all of this, God is the inexhaustible source of love. This then is the deepest cause of missions. Thus missions exists because of Divine love reaching out to all people.

The return to God is not an attachment to some peculiar society with the aim of obtaining *eternal salvation*. This shift for an individual involves a change of priorities, and a change of values, where men and women accept Christ as Lord, as the center of their lives. A Christian is not merely one who has a better perspective on obtaining *salvation*. However each person is also thereby taking on the responsibility of service to God in this life, and of drawing the world closer to the Kingdom of God in all of Its forms. This returning to God comprises personal cleansing, forgiveness, reconciliation and renewal; and the new goal of humanity consists in becoming partakers of the majestic deeds of God.

The believer is therefore a member of the Church, which is the sign of

God's kingdom, His *sacramentum mundi*, the symbol of God's new world and a foreshadowing of that which, according to God's plan, should be a new creation. We do not know everything, nevertheless we know enough and are convinced that the Religion which we confess is true and righteous and we have to proclaim it. However we do this not merely as obedient servants, but as witnesses; not merely as soldiers, but as messengers of peace; not merely as businessmen, but as ministers of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is an essential element to an understanding of *Missio Dei*. Such a triadological approach should be central to all other theological subjects.

MISSIOLOGY AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSION TODAY

All that was discussed above now falls under a new theological branch called *missiology*. The subject was formed in Western theology in the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and has its counterpart in Orthodox theology in Russia only the last few years. It is an issue that may well be the locus for discussion and research in the future for concrete strategies of the Church and its mission to a secular society, which faces many serious challenges. It may figure in important ways in discussions of the problem of the survival of the human race in society characterized by a plurality of confessions and religions, and which is now free from mediaeval patterns of church–state relations.

Missiology that works with a Christian triadological model is much more useful than a confining pragmatism that singles out the priorities of church activity and function wholly in terms of utility. The Church needs to define our attitude toward different challenges that face us, such as globalization, religious fundamentalism, aggression, and new and dangerous technologies in biology and physics, and unhealed historical–political crises and many other concerns.

Progress in Missiology is the *conditio sine qua non* of the church's accomplishing its mission at the very beginning of both this century and the new millenium. It is Missiology as a branch of Theology that determines Russia's priorities in theological education and theological endeavor in the realization of God's providence, and the *Missio Dei*, for the Church. Not only church members, but all of society waits for the Church to set for itself not a political agenda as primary, but rather a genuinely spiritual approach to newly emerging problems and challenges. The issue of unity (both of the human race, and religious and interconfessional unity), the issue of cooperation of believers and non-believers for the sake of making a new humanity, the solving of ecological and political problems, are all objectives of a properly

conceived and active Missiology, with a spiritual focus as primary. It is here in this area, that one could and should discuss in Christian triadological perspective such questions as “Church and State,” “the social ministry of the Church,” “Church and culture” and many others. The theme of culture is one of the most important concerns for Missiology, since a Christian understanding is the proper and most effective way of bringing about resolutions to all of the above-mentioned problems. The problems and issues listed present opportunities for a discussion in the centrally important framework of values. And Missiology properly understood incorporates that framework of values and thereby presents us with the possibility of the Christianization of culture. The world we live in, everyday life, the aspects of culture (including education), as constituents of mass consciousness, are not what one would call Christian, nevertheless Christian roots to our civilization and Christian values are clearly shining through it.

CHRISTIAN CULTURE

In 1994 the Bishop’s Council of the Russian Orthodox Church pronounced:

It is necessary as well to build up such a synthesis of comprehensive Christian culture, which could be a creative reflection of the eternal and unalterable truth of Orthodoxy in the ever-changing flux of reality. The important part of missionary service of the Church should be its contribution in culture, art, science and other fields of human life and endeavor. One should consider the importance of the Church in the solution of the problems of economy, ecology, peacemaking, state and social orders of life, and also the participation of Orthodox Christians in ordinary human efforts aimed at solving these problems.”¹⁷

The Bishop’s Jubilee Council reminds us: “It is necessary to develop missions beyond Church boundaries: at enterprises, in civil mass media, in transportation, in distant places from the church.”

The theme of Christian culture has a significant bearing upon one of the three parts of the report of Metr. Kyrill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, “Evangelization and Culture” which he presented at the World missionary conference in Salvador, Brazil, in 1996. The chapter, “Culture as a bearer of Christ’s Evangelism,” deals with the centrally important role of culture for preserving the faith in Russia. Metropolitan Kyrill poses the question of culture in a sharp and pointed manner thus: “Not the enculturation of Christianity, but the Christianization of culture, that is the objective of Christian missions regarding culture.”¹⁸

The other important issue is the crisis of what it is to be human and the ways of answering this question. It is a question having to do with culture and the spiritual nature of man. Culture, as the instruction of man, as the formation of a system of values, is a question of pedagogy. Christian

asceticism, preserved at its best in Orthodoxy, can be an immense resource for overcoming one global crisis, overwhelming food shortages. Grafting into secular man a culture of temperance is one of the tasks of Christian mission. It can at least serve as a starting point for training many others in the importance of personal character. At the same time, such features as Pharisaism and hypocrisy, pride and sectarian thinking, and impatience, which, alas, we also find in the Church, are the sorts of things we are to get rid of, and these objectives are the task of Christian missions. Sometimes the positive traits of Christians and priests draw the attention of newly joined members.

The special resonance we sense when speaking about Christian culture, carries with it the idea of “overcoming secularism.” Today churches talk about the common problem of secularism. Orthodox Christians, oftentimes speak of secularism as involving the de-churching of society, but in actuality it is the process of the de-Christianization of culture, in our everyday life in our civilization. The problem is particularly urgent as we consider an analysis of the process of globalization. At first glance it might be thought of as leading to a unification of the human race, but sometimes, as we all know, it doesn’t actually serve to unify. In reality, unification is getting along with those who have lost touch with their spiritual potency, and taste, and their potential for achievement in different theaters of culture. Usually this takes place in the leveling of culture, which in turn does not lead to unity, but to atomization and individualism. All of this is happening because spiritual values ceased to be the bed-rock of culture. Moreover, this trend is conditioned by the fact that religious life, including the life of Christian churches, is step by step losing touch with different aspects of human endeavor, so that even the main religious truths—the basis of Christian morality—are in danger of being lost. When religion is supplanted by ethics, morality fails to be alive. It no longer provides life-giving inspiration to strive for the good. Ethics is then reduced to etiquette. It is the very essence of radical fundamentalism (or integristism, a complicated behavioral complex, sometimes known as traditionalism, or conservatism). This approach to life is not characterized by moral self-determination, but by pharisaical scruples which fail to be convincing and socially meaningful for people remote from Religion.

People of the New Age might well be tolerant of Religion, as a private area of concern, maybe as belonging to a sphere of conscience, within which everyone has his own *hypothesis*. It is a way of forming culture free of the hierarchal dimension. *Apropos*, it is the reaction to fundamentalism and clericalism and their rejection that facilitates this sort of cultural formation.

The Savior is clear about the principles of human ethics: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also; You cannot serve both God and Money” (Mt. 6, 21, 24). Hence, the main difference between Christian ethics and the non-religious approach is clear. One is completely determined by

what one treasures.

If man is perceived as an important value, but the fact of his creation “after the image and likeness of God” is ignored, then we have the perverse, non-Christian understanding of Humanism. There is a Christian humanism as such, and what makes it so is a Christian respect for human dignity, rooted in a Christian anthropology. In Orthodoxy, the central icon is the image of God, or the image of God’ imitator, that is, the one who is like God. Accordingly, persons are to be given respect, which includes providing the appropriate conditions necessary for the actualization, implementation, and expression of this image of God in order that persons may be enabled thereby to co-act in ways that radiate God’s energies, and so enable them to shine the Light of Christ in this sometimes awfully dark world.

Oftentimes fundamentalism is regarded as a reaction to humanism, secularism, liberalism, and modernism. But a carefully worked out Missiology requires us to pay attention to these reverse mechanisms, (secularism, liberalism, and modernism), all of which may be taken as reactions to Clericalism, fundamentalism, mysticism, obscurantism and so forth. Today the reasoning of many Orthodox theologians about culture bring to mind an observation of Fr. Pavel Florensky: “The majority of cultures, correlating with their etymology (*cultura* means *that which has to be developed out of cultus*), are a germination from the seed of Religion, a mustard tree, grown up from the seed of faith....”¹⁹ When a Christian succumbs to the thought that Christianity is unable to grow up into the tree of life, unable to affect “the basic principals of this world” (Col., 2, 8), to oppose them, with the only place left for it the individual conscience, then he judged one is thereby left in anguish, and such a disposition cannot be a creative and missionary one. The immediate challenge of unbelief in this case is less damaging because it helps to delineate the Christian position. The negation of the need for a Christian to dynamic participation in social, political and economic life, is tantamount to a rejection of the concept *missions* in its wide meaning.

While believing in Christ as Lord and Savior we are aware that “this world in its present form is passing away”(1 Cor. 7, 31), but by the power of Christ it can be transformed into the image of Christ. This is the idea of Christian culture, the idea of the sanctification of the economic and political orders, and even the sanctification of nature. “All spheres of life, art, philosophy, science, politics, economics and so forth, should not be exempted as self-sufficient entities. They result in worldly images, when culture goes astray from the image of Christ. If in the realm of culture we are not with Christ, then we are inevitably against Christ, because in life there is not, and cannot be any neutrality in our attitude toward God.” Florensky thought that it wouldn’t be proper to see in these words any hint of enmity or aggression toward those who don’t confess Christ, such as representatives of other

religions and non-believers. We are to discern what is really against Christ, notwithstanding various labels or hints regarding this phenomenon or that idea. Very often a label belongs to a pharisee, a fundamentalist, or a demagogue. These only seem to be Christian, but indeed lead one far away from Christ. As a rule, everything that brings animosity and hatred as fruits, in fact, everything that doesn't promote the triumph of love, is opposed to the principles of Christian missions.

The recognition of a need to build culture after Christ's model doesn't mean that some particular socio-political or economical model might be understood as a Christian one. And it doesn't mean that Christianity can be based upon elements of culture, such as science, economics, as already something firm and established by some Christian element or truth. Each element of Christian culture can and must be understood and transformed by the Christian mind. One has commented, "Modern humankind needs Christian culture, not counterfeits, but serious and well put together according to serious Christian reflection. At any rate, every one needs to make a self-determination, whether he wants such a culture. If not, then there is no sense to speaking about Christianity and deceiving oneself and others with misty anticipations of the unreal. Without the Christian faith these hopes are but empty dreams, and as such are obstacles to life: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile...let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15: 17, 32)."²⁰

The Christocentricity of culture is one of the main objectives of Christian missions for today's Church. Every missionary effort to proceed in this direction merits church support, the assistance of its members, and the attention and attendance of her hierarchy. The Christianization of culture, its churching, if you please, does not consist in the clericalization of culture, a phenomenon which has frightened away from the Church the champions of atheistic liberalism, rightist fundamentalists and other *missionaries* of atheistic *humanism*. Clericalization today is not only unreal from the point of view of missiology, but even worse, harmful. What is the pattern for the realization of the Christianization of culture? This is a theme for special missiological analysis, with a conciliar (*sobornoi*) Christian understanding at the center. On the one hand, there are proposals for unity, on the other, also there are conflicts of the languages of disparate cultures, sometimes linking up with different Christian traditions. The criterion of the *imitation of Christ*, or *Christian piety*, is "the principle that makes Christ the central value as Lord and Savior, are the proper coordinates of Christian unity." Florensky says, "In comparison with the immensely important and salvific main stream of our conscience toward Christ, all of our local Christian discords seem to be so insignificant, as they continue to be against the background of Christian ministry to the world." In the course of life, all Christians are drawing nearer to one another. If Christians of one denomination would regard the sincerity

of Christians from another denomination, then we might not have divisions. But this hope for unity doesn't exclude the possibility and availability of differences. "At the same time, how few religious controversies might there have been had there been the proper recognition that a Christian attitude should be free from any obligation to prejudice? Nevertheless, Christians separate and feud with one another, because they get suspicious of the truth and integrity of the Christian stance of another. I have in mind here not only the different denominations, but also different trends within some confessions, and even relationships of individual Christians. The Christian world is full of internal suspicions, ill feelings and even hatred."²¹

Florensky delivers a sharp critical evaluation of the condition of the present Christian world; "it is rotten in the very foundation, for Christ's life is not in it, and along with this there is no courage and sincerity to acknowledge the rottenness of their faith."²² (Florensky, p. 552). The history of the Twentieth Century, its world wars, atrocities and the cruelties of those who supposedly call themselves Christian, supports this harsh evaluation.

Today, in interconfessional dialogues, all discussions concerning the details, nuances of dogmatic formulæ, discrepancies in worshipping rites and canonical law, must follow a properly conceived missionary framework. One should not approach matters of faith from the outside, from the position of an observer, or diplomat. In this case participants to the discussion lose a sense of spiritual reality. They are nearsighted, and cannot grasp the whole picture in its entirety. At the commencement of the third millennium is the chief issue of Christian unity, and it has to be the central matter in missiological discourse. The effort to realize this unity should be reflected in the central part of the Church's missions program.

In this context the matter of terminology is paramount: can we speak in our day of the *Christianization of culture*? Is such an objective realistic, is it acceptable? The fact is, we are faced with the more serious problem of religious pluralism and tolerance. Regarding perspective on such matters, a Christological approach should not be singled out and separated from a Triadological one. We need to help people who have lost a religious hunger, because they are without any religious experience, to return to the Father. We need to help people who don't feel they have any need to ask what the meaning of life is, who feel no need to communicate with the Logos. We need to help those who live without the Spirit, and who know little or nothing about the meaning of spiritual thirst, even though they probably have it, to experience at some point a taste and craving for the Living Water, Jesus Christ. This is the Triadological perspective of Church missions to culture. This perspective on missions requires, certainly, a special and detailed missiological foundation.

TRIADOLOGY AS AXIOMATIC OF THEOLOGY

We confess the Christian doctrine that God is one in essence in a threefoldness of Persons as a given of revelation. We believe that this was gradually disclosed to humanity in the Incarnation, which embraces the earthly life of our Savior, His death on the Cross, and Resurrection and Ascension to glory; all are held as events of Sacred History, crowned by the event of Pentecost. God is immense love in three hypostasis united in it (love). The doctrine of salvation, Soteriology, explains to us that salvation is the reaching out of God and His involvement with His creation in a redemptive way, first of all in respect to humanity. All happens as an outflowing of divine love, that is, the love of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And the Son, Christ, is performing this through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The very notion *Christian* presupposes that the basic dogma of Christian theology is a Christological one. Belief in Christ, the Son of God, is *eo ipso* belief in the Holy Trinity, in the name of which, according to the commandment of Christ, (Mt. 28, 19), Baptism, which brings the Church together, is performed. The second person of the Holy Trinity has assumed flesh, and this is why the Incarnation and Trinity are inseparable. Notwithstanding Protestant liberalism, which tries to oppose the theology of the Gospel, we claim that "Orthodox Triadology has its roots in the Gospel."²³

According to Professor Fr. Serge Bulgakov, "Christianity is the religion of the Holy Trinity so much so that even a one-sided veneration of Christ appears to be a factual deviation.... It is noteworthy that in the liturgical practice of Orthodoxy, in exclamations, doxologies, and prayers, the name of the Holy Trinity as a whole decisively predominates over the name of Jesus in particular, and this is proof that the knowledge of Christ is inseparable from the knowledge of the Holy Trinity."²⁴

The basis of Christian theology is the Holy Scriptures which are interpreted as Divine Revelation. The Orthodox understanding of Revelation is that it is fully attainable only in the Church, in the light of Her experience, Her sacred Tradition, all of which are connected to the Church through Her Mysteries. The comprehension, awareness of participation in the Church and *eo ipso* the admission of the possibility of fathoming Revelation is expressed in Theology, which includes efforts at describing personal and communal (the whole church) experiences of participation in God's life.

According to Fr. Alexander Schmemman "theology as more and more being transformed into an exact science, is thereby trying to be a science."²⁵ From the point of view of methodology and philosophy of science, according

to Fr. P. Florensky, science is a symbolical description.²⁶ Theology is a practical science and presupposes the mystical factor. At the same time the effort to find objectivity demands sobriety. On the one hand, the theologian is similar to the scientist, since both search for the truth. But it is the Christian theologian who is really aware of it, because of his special calling to serve God through his participation in the *Logos*. Watchfulness is what scientist and Christian ascetic have in common. The ascetic strives to purify his heart, and his mind from that which has the potential of polluting it, or what appears to be an obstacle to the vision of God and to communion with God. The goal of any wholehearted scientist is to free himself from prejudice and false stereotypes, in order to sharpen his seeing, and to penetrate the veil not yet taken from the mystery of the created cosmos.

In Christianity (and the Orthodox Tradition attentively keeps it) the science and art of purification, the preparation of a person to the correct perception of Revelation, are taught. First and foremost is the *ascesis* and purification of the heart. Speaking about theology as an exact science, Fr Alexander Schmemman stresses the point that it is “sobriety that appears to be one of the first steps on the road of Christian theology. This watchfulness includes self-criticism and self-examination of emotional and spiritual movements.”²⁷

In Mathematics, and likely in each science as well, and in Christian theology, there is an axiomatic structure, the system of postulates which must be accepted, and once accepted, one then builds upon them accordingly a description of a corresponding experience. If one rejects the self-evidence of the postulates, then that science (for instance, Euclidean geometry) is impossible. Non-recognition of these principles leads to the recognition of other postulates, i.e. still another geometry (Riemann’s, or Lobatchevsky’s). The same sort of thing happens in Christian theology: its axiomatic structure includes the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, a teaching about God such that He is one in essence and three in respect to Persons.

The development of this Church axiom, the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity, is based both upon the *Holy Scriptures* and Holy Tradition, i.e. the whole experience of the Church.

Tradition for the Church is essentially a scientific theological matter (not only in theory, but practically as well). It is the scholarly grasping of Revelation. It is the school where Holy Scripture (including exegesis and hermeneutics) is studied. It is a school of training where the student is trained in ascetics and worship, which prepares one for a direct approach to God, as when one faces Him in the mystery of Thanksgiving, in the Eucharist. The ascetic is important too as part of one’s experience in this school for the comprehension of Revelation, because communication with God is unattainable via the ways of philosophy and reason, that is, as far as understanding the Triune God (according to the witness of the Church’s

experience), as He unveils Himself. Disclosure doesn't happen through the medium of formal-logical discourse, but through a noetical-cordial aspiration toward Him on the part of faithful souls. When people decisively turn away from pride, sin and hard-heartedness to their neighbors, and give themselves entirely to repentance, prayer and a searching for truth, then a personal relationship with God, worshipped in Trinity, obtains for them a vital, profound and efficacious experience. The light-bearing power of the Holy Trinity enters the well-adjusted human microcosm and recreates, ennobles and enlightens. An encounter with God as Trinity takes place not only on a personal level, but in history and culture as well. It happens where cultural choice is being realized, which follows after the path of Truth and Life, but not after a spiritless and life-poisoning culture.

LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

There is an extraordinarily impressive representation of the experience of apprehending God as Trinity in Orthodox liturgical texts. As their foundation, on the one hand, they have the Holy Scriptures and dogmatics (credal formulas and postulates) and the pronouncements of the Ecumenical councils, and on the other the sacred paternal legacy, which is the offspring of perceptions of Divine revelation through the deeds of the best exponents of Church life which the Church used to call the Holy Fathers. The Liturgical praxis of the Church, the core of theology, has its roots in the Holy Scriptures. The Church is first of all the *ecclesia oranta* (the praying Church). Many theologians use the expression, *the tree of theology*, *the law of faith* (*lex credendi*) both as constantly fed by the *law of prayer* (*lex orandi*). Prof. Fr. Sergei Bulgakov used to say that his theology is drawn from the eucharist chalice. Theology is nothing other than a designation of what is revealed to man in his spiritual experience of God. The composers of canons, prayers and hymns used to glorify the Triune God in Church worship have predominantly been the Greeks. In the Russian Church these texts are known in Slavonic translations. They are poetical, lofty and godly. The idea of a non-material light-bearing God is especially reflected therein.

It is the light-bearing nature of God as Trinity that, according to the mind of church hymn-writers, evolves, raises and inspires the moral Christian life of believers. It is also important to add that graceful enlightening and sanctification is the common inheritance of all those who receive the grace of Baptism and Chrismation from the Holy Trinity. The energy of the Triune God, as interpretively reflected through the life of a Christian person, makes believers partakers of trinitarian Divine power.

The Triune God is omnipresent, omnipotent and abundant in Provision for each and every creature. Through the shining of His Deity He radiates and

communicates to people all wisdom and reason, all strength and power, all beauty and wholeness. Everyone who intellectually and whole-heartedly turns to Him, is co-present and covered by Him, instructed, strengthened in goodness, and filled with gladness. The free self-offering of believers to the love of the Holy Trinity engenders from above Divine healing and enlightening. Regarding the latter, the human conscience is kindled, the mind sees threats and takes precautions against worldly passions, and the heart is filled with bright and lofty sensations. God is love. He is not the mono-hypostatic essence for which uniqueness, which dooms him to be an egoist, is as well his limitation.

God is a self-denying love of Three, which possesses such a fullness of mutuality, that He is able to unite three in one life. Through this the limitations of oneness are overcome, and disclosure of the plenitude of life of the absolute and self-sufficient Spirit takes place.

In Orthodox liturgical texts we more often meet the definitions of God's traits than intellectual discourse about the *essence* of God. The Divine entity or Godhead, according to theologian-liturgists, is uncreated, original, sovereign, everlasting, simple, ever-creative, omnipotent and incomprehensible.²⁸

God is the purest Personal Spirit, indescribable and unfathomable to finite sight. He is the Master of Light and the Sun of glory, He is immaterial light, monarchy, indivisible, and omnipotent, for He is dwelling in unsearchable, immaterial light, outgoing from His most pure Essence, and enlightening the created order.

The most holy Theotokos, Mary (the Mother of God), is the most perfect image of veneration of the Holy Trinity for worship. She was made as the purest dwelling place of God, and literally, the Father made Her by love, the Son by Incarnation, the Holy Ghost by visitation. As the Intercessor before God for the sinful human race, Theotokos supplicates the Father, beseeches the Son, invokes the Holy Spirit and pleases the trinitarian God for the forgiveness of repentant sinners.²⁹

In every worldly action of the Persons of the Holy Trinity toward people, Liturgical theology always singles out one dominant and two complementary actions of the Divine Persons. The dominant action of the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit is the invocation of the created cosmos, angels, and people from non-being into being, and adoption according to the grace believers have in Christ by the Father as sons. To save the fallen human race God the Father sent to earth His only begotten Son, and after His ascension to heaven, He sent then His Spirit to fulfill the salvation of repentance rendered by his followers, issuing from His grace and mercy. The dominant action on earth of the Son of God according to the will of the Father in the Holy Spirit consists in coming down and appearing in the flesh, the sacrifice on the cross for the salvation of the world, destroying the powers of sin, death and the

devil, and reunion of believers with the Father.³⁰

The Comforter, the Holy Spirit is *par excellence* the Enlightener and Sanctifier of people, the Giver of Divine gifts according to the will of God the Father for the sake of the sufferings of the Son of God on the cross for the world. The blessings of the Holy Trinity, granted to humans in this life and those prepared for life to come, are immense and incessant. God, worshipped as the Trinity, loves the pure and righteous, and He is merciful and accepts by His graceful communion repentant sinners as well, and bestows upon them the spirit of true repentance for their sins.

Presented in Liturgical theology, the dogma of the Holy Trinity, paradoxical and incomprehensible as it may be, is disclosed in the life experience of each and every Christian as unchangeable truth.

Church missions today must be understood not as a specific ministry of the Church, not as some complementary service, but directly as a self-actualization of the Church. Karl Rahner called missiology the science of the missionary "self-realization of the Church."³¹ Today the genuine restoration of Religious life in Russia badly needs such an understanding. Therefore the triadological approach is exactly the one which allows us to see missions as dominant, and that this is essential at all levels of church life, at the parish, in church schools, in strategies of hierarchy, in relationships of Church and Society, in the matters of family upbringing and in service to Christian culture.

NOTES

- ¹ “*Prostranny catekhesis....*” M., 1824.
- ² Elpidinsky, 1912.
- ³ Pronoun references were changed to *she, her*, for consistency with the *her* at the end of the remark, where the reference is *the Church*.
- ⁴ S. Bolatov, Paris.
- ⁵ Fr. Sergius Mansurov, *Essays*, 1971.
- ⁶ S. Bulgakov, *Orthodoxy*, Paris.
- ⁷ *The Shepherd of Hermas*, 2, 4, 1.
- ⁸ Florensky, P., *The Pillar and Affirmation of the Truth*. M., 1914, p. 54.
- ⁹ *Theological Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 1572.
- ¹⁰ Tambaran Series, vol. 1, *The Authority of the Faith*, London, 1939, pp. 183–184.
- ¹¹ Anne Marie Argaard, p. 423.
- ¹² J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 1977, p. 64.
- ¹³ Anastasios of Androussa, *Orthodox Mission*, 1989, pp. 799–81, 89.
- ¹⁴ LWF, 1988, 8.
- ¹⁵ Argaard.
- ¹⁶ *Ad gentes*, 1992, p. 480.
- ¹⁷ The Bishop’s Council, November 29th, 1994, in “Orthodox Mission Today,” 2000, p. 8.
- ¹⁸ Bishop’s Council, p. 32.
- ¹⁹ Florensky, P. A. *Christian Culture*, M., 1996, V. 2, p. 549.
- ²⁰ Florensky, p. 551.
- ²¹ Florensky, p. 551.
- ²² Florensky, p. 552.
- ²³ Lossky, V. N., *Outlines of Mystical Theology*, M. 1991, p. 208.
- ²⁴ S. Bulgakov, *Orthodoxy*, p. 31.
- ²⁵ Schmemman, *Introduction to Orthodox Theology*. In my opinion, it would be better to substitute *try to be* for *is being aware, or becoming*.
- ²⁶ See his article, “Science as Description,” *Works*, vol. 3 (1), pp. 104–118.
- ²⁷ Schmemman, *ibid*.
- ²⁸ *Oktoichos*.
- ²⁹ Festal Triodion.
- ³⁰ *The Service and Akathistos to the Holy Trinity*.
- ³¹ *Grundprinzipien*, pp. 49f.

THE HOLY TRINITY: PARADIGM OF THE HUMAN PERSON

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Among the various models which may legitimately be used in Trinitarian theology, perhaps the most helpful is the analogy of mutual love. Such an approach is adopted by the Cappadocian Fathers, who see the Trinity as a ‘communion’ (*koinonia*) of three hypostaseis; by Augustine, with his understanding of the Trinity as lover (*amans*), beloved (*quod amatur*), and love (*amor*); and by Richard of St Victor, with his interpretation of the Holy Spirit as ‘co-beloved’ (*condflectus*). Careful safeguards have to be inserted, so as to ensure that this view of the Trinity does not lead to tritheism. It has, however, the major advantage of establishing a link between the Trinity and the theology of human personhood.

Between the Trinity and hell there lies no other choice.

Fr Pavel Florensky

Our social programme is the doctrine of the Trinity.

Nikolai Fyodorov

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?

“Christians, for all their Orthodox profession of faith in the Trinity, are in effect virtually ‘monotheist’ in their actual religious experience. One might even dare to affirm that, if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be erased as false, most religious literature could be preserved almost unchanged in the process.”¹ So writes the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner; and surely with regret we must admit the truth of what he says. All too many Christians at the present time find it difficult to give specific content to the doctrine of the Trinity; most of them simply ignore it as irrelevant. ‘Three-in-One and One-in-Three’: is this no more than a conundrum, a theological riddle? Do I

feel that the doctrine of the Trinity has something directly to do with *me*? What practical effect does it have upon my daily life, upon my understanding of prayer, of human personhood, of society and politics? As Christians we are not simply monotheists, as are the Jews and Muslims, nor yet are we polytheists, like Homer, but we see in God both total unity and genuine personal diversity. Yet in practice what difference does this make to the way in which we think and act?

At the outset, it has to be emphasized that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery beyond human understanding. Here I disagree strongly with the view of Vladimir Solovyov, who describes Trinitarian doctrine as “totally comprehensible in its logical aspect.”² Vladimir Lossky comes closer to the truth when he observes, “The dogma of the Trinity is a cross for human ways of thought...no philosophical speculation has ever succeeded in rising to the mystery of the Holy Trinity.”³ It does not follow from this that there is nothing at all to be said about the Trinity; on the contrary, a ‘mystery’ in the true theological meaning of the word is indeed something that is revealed to our human understanding, but it is never exhaustively revealed, because it reaches into the depths of the divine darkness. What is affirmed concerning the threefoldness of God in Scripture, and in the Councils and Fathers of the Church, is to be accepted as true, and yet it does not and cannot express the total truth in its living and transcendent wholeness.

Alongside the dogmatic definitions of the Church, there are in the Bible and the Fathers many images and analogies which are used to convey the significance of God as Trinity. None of these images and analogies should be regarded as a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; for this doctrine is something which is not capable of logical proof, but which as Christians we accept as given to us through divine revelation. The doctrine of the Trinity, that is to say, is a datum, not a conclusion. But, while the analogies and paradigms do not prove the mystery of the Trinity, they certainly help us to understand it, insofar as such understanding is possible, and they serve to indicate the practical consequences of Trinitarian belief. As in all analogical thinking, the models and paradigms that we employ are not to be envisaged as mutually exclusive. There is no single key to the doctrine of the Trinity; we need to use a variety of approaches.

Among the many different models used in Trinitarian theology, perhaps the most helpful is the paradigm of mutual love. On this analogy, the Trinity is interpreted as a community or communion of *hypostaseis* or persons, united to each other by bonds of reciprocal love. One major advantage of this analogy is that it possesses a clear Scriptural basis, particularly in the Johannine writings. The mutual love of the Father and the Son is a master-theme in the Fourth Gospel (John 3: 35, 10:17, 15:9, 17:23–24, etc.), while in the First Epistle of John it is plainly affirmed, ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8).

This paradigm of God as mutual love has been fundamental for Russian

theology in the past 150 years, as is strikingly indicated in the remarkable book of Fr Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology*, dealing especially with Solovyov, Florensky and Bulgakov.⁴ Meerson in his book says relatively little about the earlier use of the paradigm of mutual love prior to the 19th century; although he discusses Richard of St Victor in some detail, he makes only passing references to the Cappadocians and St. Augustine, for this is not his main theme. In my paper today, not wishing to duplicate what he has said, I shall explore the *Trinity of Love* with reference primarily to the Patristic and medieval tradition. I shall then end with the question: How does this analogy of God as mutual love help us to understand the nature of human personhood?

The basis of any understanding of God as mutual love is of course the fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26–27), and that means in the image of God who is Trinity. Looking inwards we can find within our soul what Augustine terms ‘vestiges’ of the Trinity. These Trinitarian analogies from human personhood can take two forms, unipersonal and interpersonal. The Trinity may be likened either to the interaction of faculties within a single person or to the inter-relationships within a community of persons. It is with the interpersonal paradigm that I shall be concerned here. The analogy of mutual love, it may be noted, can be applied in two directions: we may use our human understanding of what it is to be a person to illuminate our understanding of God; or we may use the doctrine of the Trinity to shed light on the doctrine of the human person. While we must be careful not to argue in a circle, I see no reason why the analogy may not be used in both directions at once.

THREE WITNESSES: THE CAPPADOCIANS, AUGUSTINE, RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR

Appealing to Patristic tradition, let us first consider a key term used by St Basil the Great and St Gregory of Nyssa: and this is the word *koinonia*, ‘communion’ or ‘fellowship.’ Whereas St Athanasius speaks of God’s unity primarily in terms of substance or essence, assigning central significance to the word *homoousios*, ‘consubstantial,’ Basil and the other Cappadocians prefer to express God’s oneness in terms of the communion or mutual relationships between the three *hypostaseis* or persons. “The unity of God,” writes Basil, “lies in the communion (*koinonia*) of the Godhead.”⁵ In the words of Gregory of Nyssa, “It is not possible to envisage any severance or division, such that one might think of the Son without the Father or separate the Spirit from the Son; but there is between them an ineffable and inconceivable communion (*koinonia*) and distinction.”⁶ Divine unity is in this

way interpreted not primarily in abstract or essentialist terms, as a unity of nature or substance, but rather in personalist terms, as a unity expressed through the interaction of the *hypostaseis*. In the words of John Zizioulas, Metropolitan of Pergamon, "The being of God is a relational being: without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God."⁷

Here, then, is a vital clue to the inner meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a way of saying that God is communion or community. God is 'social' or 'conciliar'; there is something in Him that corresponds, although at an infinitely higher level, to our human experience of *sobornost*.

Turning to Augustine, at first sight we might be inclined to think that his treatment of the Trinity is very different from that of the Cappadocians. He emphasises far more than they do the unity of the Godhead, starting from the shared essence rather than the inter-relationship of the persons: 'The divinity...is the unity of the Trinity.'⁸ Moreover, when developing an analogy between God and human personhood, in his two 'Trinities of the mind' he thinks in unipersonal rather than interpersonal terms. But, before proposing these 'Trinities of the mind,' Augustine does in fact advance an interpersonal analogy of mutual love. It is true that he says relatively little about this, but I myself have always found it far more helpful than the 'Trinities of the mind' that he develops at so much greater length.

Love, says Augustine in his interpersonal model of the Trinity, implies three elements: the lover (*amans*), that which is loved (*quod amatur*), and the love (*amor*) which passes reciprocally between the lover and that which is loved.⁹ Applying this to the Trinity, the Father is to be seen as the lover, the Son as the beloved, and the Spirit as the *vinculum amoris*, the bond of love uniting them both. Now most modern Augustinian specialists assume that this *Trinity of Love* is far less important for him than the two 'Trinities of the mind,' to which he devotes much more space. But in fact, at the end of his work *De Trinitate* he returns to his interpersonal paradigm of love, and he suggests that among all the different analogies this is perhaps the least inadequate.¹⁰

From an Orthodox point of view, Augustine's *Trinity of Love* might be thought to suffer from two defects. First, his notion of the Spirit as the mutual love that passes between the Father and the Son seems to lead directly to the doctrine of the *Filioque*. In reality, however, Augustine was never a 'Filioquist' in any extreme or unqualified sense. For like the Cappadocians he regarded the Father as the unique *principium*, the sole source and origin of hypostatic being within the Godhead; the Spirit proceeds *principally* (*principaliter*) from the Father, and only in a secondary and derivative sense from the Son, *through the gift of the Father (per donum Patris)*.¹¹ A second and, in my judgement, more serious objection to Augustine's *Trinity of love* is that it likens God to two persons, not three; for while lover and beloved are

both persons, the mutual love passing between them is not a third person additional to other two. In this way, the analogy is in danger of depersonalizing the Holy Spirit, although this certainly was not Augustine's intention.

This defect in Augustine's analogy—that it is bipersonal rather than tripersonal—is fortunately avoided by the third of my witnesses, a 12th-century native of Scotland, Richard of St Victor, who gives to the analogy of love a much more explicitly triadic structure than Augustine does. 'God is love' (1 John 4:8): such is Richard's starting point. Love is the perfection of human nature, the highest reality within our experience of personhood; and so it is also the quality within human life that brings us closest to God, expressing—better than anything else that we know—the perfection of divine nature.

Self-love, however, the love of one turned inwards, is not true love. Love is gift and exchange, and so to be present in its fullness it needs to be mutual. It requires a 'thou' as well as an 'I,' and that can only happen when there is present a plurality of persons: "The perfection of one person requires fellowship with another...nothing is more glorious than to wish to have nothing that you do not wish to share."¹² If, then, God is love, it is inconceivable that he should merely one person loving Himself. He must be at least two persons, Father and Son, loving each other.

Richard now takes a further step in his argument, and it is precisely here that his *Trinity of love* is manifestly superior to that of Augustine. To exist in its plenitude, maintains Richard, love needs to be not only 'mutual' but 'shared.' The lover not only loves the beloved as a second self, but wishes the beloved to have the further joy of loving a third, jointly with the lover, and of being jointly loved by that third. 'The sharing of love cannot exist among any less than three persons...Shared love is properly said to exist when a third person is loved by two persons harmoniously and in community, and when the affection of the two persons is in this way fused into one affection by the flame of love for a third.'¹³ In the case of God, this 'third' with whom the other two share their mutual love is the Holy Spirit, whom Richard terms *condilectus*, the 'co-beloved.'

In this way, Richard, in common with the Cappadocians, sees God in terms of interpersonal community. His Trinitarian teaching posits a movement from self-love or the love of one (the Father alone) to mutual love or the love of two (Father and Son), and then from mutual love to shared love or the love of three (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). In the words of St Gregory of Nazianzus, "The monad, moving forth into the dyad, came to rest in the triad."¹⁴

Combining together our three witnesses, the Cappadocians, Augustine and Richard of St Victor, we arrive at a doctrine of the Trinity which sees God in terms of self-giving and response. God, so the doctrine of the Trinity

is telling us, is not just self-love but shared love. God is not a single person loving Himself alone. God is a triunity of persons loving each other, and in that reciprocal love the persons are totally ‘oned’ without thereby losing their distinctive individuality. In the words of St John of Damascus, the three are “united yet not confused, distinct yet not divided.”¹⁵ We are thus to see God’s oneness, not as a bare mathematical unity, but as an organically structured unity, an ‘internally constitutive unity,’ in Leonard Hodgson’s phrase.¹⁶ The divine simplicity is a complex simplicity. The three persons are joined to one another in a union that does not destroy but enhances and fulfils the individual character of each.

As Karl Barth puts it, the Christian God is ‘not a lonely God.’¹⁷ God, so the paradigm of mutual love affirms, is not just a unit but a union, not just personal but interpersonal. God is social or dialogic; there is within Him a timeless dialogue. From all eternity the First Person addresses the Second: “Thou art My beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). From all eternity the Second replies to the First: “Abba, Father; Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). From all eternity, the Holy Spirit, “who proceeds from the Father and rests upon the Son,”¹⁸ sets the seal upon this interchange of love. It is this timeless dialogue of love that is movingly depicted in St Andrew Rublev’s icon: the three angels are not just gazing out into space, nor are they just looking at us, but they are looking at one another. Uniting the three together—marked out through the inclination of their heads and the lines of their shoulders, legs, and feet—there is in the icon an enfolding circle: the great *O* of love.

Such then is the meaning, or part of the meaning, of the mystery of the Holy Trinity. While God infinitely transcends all our human notions of personal inter-relationship, we do not err in conceiving Him in terms of sharing, solidarity and mutual love. If that is indeed what the doctrine of the Trinity signifies, then surely it is very far from being merely a technical and ‘academic’ topic, of interest only to specialists. On the contrary, for all of us it involves in a direct and literal way matters of life and death—of eternal life and eternal death. At every celebration of the Divine Liturgy we hear the words, “Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence and undivided.” Either we love one another after the image of the Holy Trinity, or there is in the last resort a fatal loss of all joy and all meaning. That is why Fr Pavel Florensky was right to warn us, “Between the Trinity and hell there lies no other choice.”¹⁹ The doctrine of the Trinity has in this way revolutionary consequences for our understanding of personhood and society.

WALKING ALONG A RIDGEWAY

Before considering what these practical consequences may be, we have to

confront a major difficulty. Are we in danger of deviating into tritheism? It has often been objected that the 'social' interpretation of the Trinity, as presented above, undermines the divine unity, in effect positing the existence of three Gods, not one. For precisely this reason, Pope Benedict XV in 1745 condemned the kind of representation that is found in Rublev's icon, with the Trinity depicted as three distinct figures. The analogy of shared love, in common with every other analogy, needs to be restricted by a series of checks and balances. If unipersonal analogies of the Trinity, unless appropriately qualified, are in danger of leading to modalism, then interpersonal analogies have also to be qualified if they are to avoid pluralism. In Trinitarian theology we are always walking along a ridge with a precipice on either hand, and it is never easy to keep our feet firmly on the middle ground.

The crypto-tritheist perils of the 'mutual love' paradigm may be spelt out more fully in two ways:

(1) In likening the Trinity to a human community of three persons, are we perhaps reading into the Patristic terms *hypostasis* and *prosopon* our modern notion of personhood—a notion which the Greek Fathers did not share? While there is among contemporary philosophers, psychologists and sociologists no agreed definition of what constitutes a 'person,' it can certainly be argued in general terms that, when we today speak about the 'person,' we have in mind primarily our awareness of being each a distinct centre of self-consciousness, of feeling and of willing. In the modern usage of the term, the emphasis is upon inner subjectivity. But the Patristic words *prosopon* (literally 'face') and *hypostasis* (literally 'substratum,' and hence that which exists firmly, which has stability and durability) do not convey, in such a clear and direct way, the notion of inner subjectivity. The emphasis is objective rather than subjective, indicating the way in which a person appears to an outside observer. Thus the Greek Fathers, in speaking of God as three *prosopa* or three *hypostaseis* did not necessarily mean that there are in God three distinct centres of self-consciousness. Perhaps their meaning was that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each a distinct and enduring 'mode of existence' (*tropos hyparxeos*).

From all this, Karl Barth draws the conclusion that what we today mean by 'personality' should be assigned, in God's case, not to the three *prosopa* or *hypostaseis* but to the one essence (*ousia*). God, he says, is not three personalities but one, not three 'I's but one 'I' three times over.²⁰ Barth therefore prefers to speak, not of three persons in the Trinity, but of three 'ways of being.'²¹ Similarly, Karl Rahner talks of three 'manners of subsisting,'²² while John Macquarrie refers to three 'movements of Being.'²³

(2) In likening the Trinity to a human community of three persons, have we sufficiently allowed for the fact that the union of Father, Son and Spirit is incomparably closer and stronger than any human association can ever be? Should we not feel uneasy when the Cappadocians liken the divine Triad to a human triad such as Adam, Eve and Seth, or Peter, James and John? Peter,

James and John are each a man, and together they constitute three men. Father, Son and Spirit, on the other hand, while each a divine *hypostasis*, together constitute not three Gods but one God. What safeguards can we insert into our paradigm of mutual love, so as to ensure that the divine unity is regarded as unique and *sui generis*?

Such are the objections, and they deserve to be taken seriously. Yet there are also answers:

(1) While we should take care not to read back automatically our post-Cartesian and post-Freudian understanding of personhood into the texts of the Fathers, let us also remember that the concept of personhood is not just a modern discovery. In the Greek Classical world, in the New Testament and in Patristic texts, the notion of the person as a conscious subject is by no means totally absent. In the Gospel, when Jesus prays to His Father and the Father replies, surely more is involved than an overlapping between two 'manners of subsisting.' And when the Fourth Gospel interprets the relationship between Father and Son in terms of mutual love, let us keep in view the truth that only persons are capable of such love; 'movements' or 'ways of being' do not and cannot love one another. Does Barth's approach allow sufficient place for interpersonal love within the Godhead? If the paradigm of mutual love, pushed to extremes, is in danger of becoming tritheistic, do we not see in theologians such as Barth, Rahner and Macquarrie a corresponding tendency in the opposite direction toward modalism? Is there not a grave risk here of depersonalizing the Trinity?

(2) In likening the divine *koinonia* to a community of three human persons, the Cappadocian Fathers—always faithful to an apophatic understanding of God—were in fact careful to insist that there is a vital distinction of levels. God is not a person, or rather three persons, in the same sense that we are persons. This does not mean, however, that God is *less* personal than we are, but on the contrary that he is unimaginably *more* personal. Yet at the same time we certainly should not—in a crude and unqualified way—project upon uncreated Godhead our created sense of being personal. An analogy does not signify identity.

The Cappadocians had in fact a number of ways whereby they safeguarded the unique character of the divine unity: in particular, through their understanding of the Father as the sole source and fountainhead of hypostatic subsistence within the Trinity (the 'monarchy' of the Father); through their emphasis upon the *perichoresis*²⁴ of the three persons, upon their coinherence and mutual indwelling; and above all through their insistence that the three members of the Trinity share a single energy and a single will, which is certainly not the case with three human persons.²⁵

It was Newman, I believe, who once described theology as 'saying and unsaying to a positive effect.' That is undoubtedly true of the theology of the Trinity. We have continually to 'say' and 'unsay,' checking and

counterbalancing one paradigm with another. Undoubtedly we should not employ the analogy of mutual love to the exclusion of all other images and models. Yet it may still be claimed that this paradigm enables us to 'make sense' of the doctrine of the Trinity in a way that no other paradigm can do. Richard of St Victor rightly perceived that, within our human existence, it is the experience of loving and being loved that provides the least imperfect analogue of divine life.

IN THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

We spoke earlier of the revolutionary consequences which the doctrine of the Trinity can and should have upon our understanding of human personhood. Let us now explore some of these consequences. 'As You, Father, are in Me, and I am in You,' says Christ in His high-priestly prayer at the Last Supper, "may they also be one in Us...May they be one, even as We are one: I in them and You in Me, may they become completely one" (John 17: 21–23). 'Even as,' says Christ. Our human communion may be no more than a dim shadow of divine intersubjectivity, yet it is nevertheless our vocation to become, in Charles Wesley's words, 'Transcripts of the Trinity.'

Since we are created in the image of the God the Trinity, all that has so far been said about God can and must be applied, with appropriate qualifications, to ourselves as human persons:

"God is love" (1 John 4:8): it therefore follows, as William Blake affirms, "Man is love."

The being of God is a relational being: so also is our being as human persons.

Without the concept of communion it is not possible to speak of the being of God: so also without the concept of communion it is not possible to speak the truth about human beings.

"United yet not confused, distinct yet not divided": such are the divine persons, and such also, although on a different level, are the human persons—in-relationship who are formed in God's image.

God is self-giving, solidarity, reciprocity, response: such also is the human person.

God is shared love, not self-love: such also is the human person.

God is coinherence, *perichoresis*, the 'round dance' of love: such also, on a created level, is the human person.

God expresses Himself from all eternity in a relationship of I-and-Thou: so also within time does the human person. The Trinitarian image in which we are created is not possessed by any one of us in isolation from our neighbour. The image comes to its fulfilment only in the 'between' of love, in the 'and' which joins the 'I' to the 'thou.'

It is no coincidence that, in the account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis, immediately after the statement that God created humankind in His own image, it is then stated, 'Male and female, He created them' (Genesis 1:27). The divine Trinitarian image is given not to the man alone or to the woman alone, but to the two of them together; it comes to full realisation in the 'between' that unites them. Because God is 'social,' because His being is 'relational being,' the divine image in human persons has an essentially social and relational expression. It is reflected, that is to say, in the community of marriage, in the primordial social bond between man and woman, which is the foundation of all other forms of social relationship. Only within an interpersonal community can the triune likeness be properly expressed. Those of us who do not in fact marry have to express our personhood through other types of community, for example, through membership of a monastery.

The Scottish philosopher John Macmurray, in his unduly neglected Gifford Lectures, has powerfully underlined this relational character of human personhood according to the divine image. As persons, so he rightly insists, we are what we are only in relation to other persons: "The Self exists only in dynamic relation with the Other...The Self is constituted by its relation to the Other...It has its being in its relationship."²⁶ There is therefore no true person except when there are at least two persons communicating with each other; to be human is to be dialogic. "Since mutuality is constitutive for the personal, it follows that "I" need "you" in order to be myself."²⁷

Selfhood is social, or it is nothing. The authentic human being is not egocentric but exocentric. I am not a *prosopon*, a face or person, unless after the image of the Trinity I face others, looking into their eyes and allowing them to look into mine. I realize myself as a *prosopon*, a person-in-relation rather than an isolated individual, only insofar as I greet others as persons. In the words of St Basil, "Who does not know that the human animal is tame and social, not solitary and wild? For nothing is so characteristic of our nature as to communicate with one another, and to need one another, and to love one our own kind."²⁸ All this is true, *because God is Trinity*.

Why is it that in the Lord's Prayer we say not 'me' but 'us,' not 'my' but 'our'? *Because God is Trinity*. Why is it that, in the words of Dostoevsky's *starets*, Zosima, we are 'responsible for everyone and everything'? *Because God is Trinity*. Why is it that, not only at the Eucharist but throughout the entire Liturgy of human life, we offer 'in all things and for all things'? *Because God is Trinity*. Why was Cain at fault when he said to God, 'Am I my brother's keeper'? *Because God is Trinity*.

In this way faith in God as Trinity, so far from being speculative and theoretical, has an immediate and transfiguring effect upon the way in which we live our daily life. Fyodorov was fully justified in claiming that our social programme as Christians is the doctrine of the Trinity. Belief in God who is Three-in-One, whose characteristics are sharing and solidarity, has far-

reaching practical implications for our Christian attitude towards politics, economics and social action; and it is our task to work out these consequences in full detail. Every form of community—the family, the school, the workplace, the local Eucharistic center, the monastery, the city, the nation—has the vocation to become, each according to its own modality, a living icon of the Holy Trinity. Faith in the Trinitarian God, in the God of personal inter-relationship and shared love, commits us to struggle, with all our strength, against poverty, exploitation, oppression and disease. When as Christians we fight for justice and human rights, for a compassionate and caring society, we are acting specifically *in the name of the Trinity*. Precisely because we believe that God is Three-in-One, we cannot remain indifferent to any suffering, by any member of the human race, in any part of the world.

Such is the compelling relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity—understood according to the paradigm of mutual love—for the life and action of every one of us. Without the Trinity, none of us can be fully a person. Because we believe in the Trinity, each of us is a woman or man for others; every human being is our sister or brother, and we are called to bear their burdens, making their joys and sorrows our own. If only we had the courage truly to be ‘Transcripts of the Trinity,’ we could turn the world upside down.

NOTES

- ¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* (London 1966), 4:79.
- ² Quoted in Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov. Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Edinburgh 2000), 156.
- ³ *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London 1957), 66.
- ⁴ Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology. The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov)* (Quincy 1998).
- ⁵ *On the Holy Spirit* xviii [45].
- ⁶ *On the Difference between Essence and Hypostasis* [=Basil, Letter 38], 4.
- ⁷ *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London 1985), 17.
- ⁸ *De Trinitate* 1.8[15].
- ⁹ *De Trinitate* 8.14[10].
- ¹⁰ *De Trinitate* 15.10[6]; cf. 15.27[17].
- ¹¹ *De Trinitate* 15.29[17].
- ¹² *De Trinitate* (PL 196) 3:6
- ¹³ *De Trinitate* 3:14, 19.
- ¹⁴ *Orations* 29:2.
- ¹⁵ *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1:8
- ¹⁶ *The Doctrine of the Trinity* (London 1943), 107.
- ¹⁷ *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York 1959), 42.
- ¹⁸ Hymn at Vespers at the Feast of Pentecost; cf. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 1:7
- ¹⁹ Quoted in Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 66.
- ²⁰ *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh 1936), 1:1:403
- ²¹ *Dogmatics in Outline*, 42.
- ²² *The Trinity* (New York 1970)
- ²³ *The Principles of Christian Theology* (London 1977)
- ²⁴ The Cappadocians themselves do not use this particular term; it was introduced into Trinitarian theology chiefly by John of Damascus.
- ²⁵ For a fuller discussion of these three points, see Kallistos Ware, 'The Trinity: Heart of Our Life,' in James S. Cutsinger (ed.), *Reclaiming the Great Tradition: Evangelicals, Catholics and Orthodox in Dialogue* (Downers Grove 1997), 137–40.
- ²⁶ *Persons in Relation* (London 1961), 17. Somewhat surprisingly Macmurray himself nowhere connects the relational character of the human person with the doctrine of the Trinity.
- ²⁷ *Persons in Relation*, 69.
- ²⁸ Longer Rules 3:1.s

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agnus-the image of a lamb as symbolically representing Christ. The fuller Latin locution is, *Agnus Dei*, which translates, *Lamb of God*.

Analogies of the Trinity-similarities or likenesses to the Trinity drawn from various areas of experience or from the created world. Augustine is famous for his many analogies drawn to the Trinity in his, *De Trinitate*.

Apophatic-a negative (*apophasis*) approach to knowing (*agnosia*) begins when one recognizes that God is a mystery. It is contrasted by Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (c.500) with the cataphatic theology of affirmation involving rational understanding.

Arianism-the doctrine of Arius, an Alexandrian of the 4th century, who taught that Jesus was not of the same substance as God, but only the best of created beings.

Cambridge Platonism-scholars at Cambridge University who defended their Christian beliefs about the Trinity and Incarnation in response to atheists and deists. They included Benjamin Whichote, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, John Smith, Peter Sterry, and Nathaniel Culverwell. John Norris and Joseph Glanville were Oxonian scholars later added to this list.

Cataphatic-see apophatic.

Cappadocians/Cappadocianism-the tradition championed by three brilliant leaders of philosophical Christian orthodoxy in the later 4th century, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Their influence led to the defeat of Arianism (see Arianism) at the Council of Constantinople of 381 A.D.

Chalcedonian Council/Chalcedonianism-The Church Council of 451 A.D. which formulated and defended the view which affirms that the two natures of Christ (human and divine) are without confusion, without change, without division and without separation.

Christology-The doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity for Christian faith.

Circumincession-the word denotes the *mutual immanence* of the three persons of the Trinity, their reciprocal interiority, and their unceasing vital presence to each other.

It is a spelling out of the *perichoretic* relation that holds among the members of the Trinity (see *perichoresis*).

Circuminsession-stresses the *abiding/continuing reality* of the dynamic circulation of the members of the Trinity. It is a fleshing out of the perichoretic relation in an *abiding* way (see *perichoresis*).

Communicatio idiomatum-the doctrine that the human and divine attributes are predicable of the same individual.

Consubstantiality-*sharing in a substance with*, as for example the Son is viewed as sharing with the Father.

Councils, the Seven-Nicea I (325 A.D.), Constantinople I (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople II (553), Constantinople III (681), Nicea II (787). The Seven Councils of the *Orthodox Church* (according to the historical reckoning of Orthodoxy) mark off the main set of doctrinal beliefs of Orthodoxy.

Count noun-individual things (substances) belong to kinds. (They may be, for example, tables, or persons, or planets). A count noun is a word such as "table," "person," "planet," so called because it enables us to count members of the kind and say that there are (for example) ten tables, or nine planets. By contrast, stuff such as water or air or gold is not an individual substance (although a substance may be made out of it) and so one cannot count water, only pints of water or bottles containing water. Words such as "water," "air," and "gold," are mass nouns.

Deism-a term which was equivalent in meaning to *theism* before the 1700s, but later in the 17th and 18th centuries came to mean the view that God creates the world and lets it develop on its own. British representatives included: Anthony Collins, John Tolland, Herbert of Cherbury, Matthew Tindal, Thomas Chubb. On the Continent Voltaire and Reimarus were representatives. In America the list included Thomas Paine and Elihu Palmer.

Economic Trinity-the view which distinguishes between the different persons of the Trinity by their different roles in respect to Creation and Redemption, but which also involves the further claim that this picture of roles provides no access to or knowledge of the eternal nature of God.

Filioque-an expression which translates the phrase, "and the Son," which was inserted in the Nicene-Constantinople Creed after the words "proceeds from the Father," to convey the doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds both from the Father and the Son. This addition crept into the Creed in the Western Church without receiving any approval of any council recognized by the Orthodox Church.

Hesychasm-Hesychasts claimed that in their prayer of silence they had direct access to God described in a negative rather than positive way. The propriety of this kind of prayer (with the details of the way in which it was practiced), was the subject of great controversy in the Orthodox Church in the middle of the 14th Century.

Homoousion-of one substance, a term used in the Nicene Creed to express the relation between the Father and the Son as one that involves a sharing of one substance, originally designed to rule out Arianism.

Hypostasis/hypostatic-literally, *substance*, carrying the meaning, *having objective reality*, as opposed to involving *illusion*. In early Christian thought, it is used to denote a *reality*, a *substantive reality*. Earlier, it wasn't distinguished from *ousia* (*substance*), but in the middle of the 4th century A.D., it was contrasted with *ousia*, and had the meaning, *individual reality*, especially in Trinitarian and Christological contexts.

Icon-a picture of God, Christ, or the saints, used to convey doctrine, and an object of veneration in the Orthodox tradition.

Identity of indiscernibles-the principle that, if *a* and *b* have all their properties in common, then they are the same thing. This can be spelled out in different ways according to what counts as a property.

Kenotic/kenosis-the emptying of certain divine properties in the condescension contemplated in the Incarnation and alluded to in Philippians 2, 5-7. There, Christ is spoken of as having "emptied himself."

Latin Trinity-a view of the Trinity which emphasizes the unity of the Persons forming one Godhead, and rejects the social metaphor of persons dwelling together as a unitary society in loving community.

Mass term/mass nouns-see *count nouns*.

Missio dei-the chief agent behind missions is the Trinitarian God, and humans derive their missionary task from God by his permission and commission.

Modalism-the view that the Persons of the Trinity are only modes of a unitary God, not distinct persons or substances.

Monotheism-the view that there is only one God, in contrast to polytheism, the view that there is more than one God, perhaps many.

Neo-Nicene-a new slant on Nicenism, see Nicene.

Nicene-the Council of Nicaea of 325 A.D. primarily focused on Arianism and its refutation. It is this creedal statement which includes the term, *homoousios*, *one substance*, stressing that the Son is of one substance with the Father, and hence is divine.

Orthodoxy-has at least two meanings: (1) *orthodox* in the sense that *a teaching conforms to a correct understanding of the Scriptures*; (2) *Orthodox* as a name for the Eastern Church, that branch of the church which gradually separated off from what became the Roman Catholic Church in the 11th Century. (In this latter sense, the word is often written with a capital O).

Patriarchate(s)/Patriarch(s)-a self-governing (autocephalous) church group in the Orthodox faith, of which there are four ancient Patriarchates, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and nine

additional ones, Russia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Cyprus, Greece, Poland, Albania, and five which do not possess full independence, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Sinai, Finland, Japan and China. A Patriarch is the head of a Patriarchate.

Perichoresis-has two meanings: (1) *perichoresis fuseon*, the interpenetration of the two natures of Christ, human and divine; (2) *perichoresis upostaton*, the interpenetration of the Persons of the Trinity. Literally, perichoresis means, *rotation*, or, *to go around*. It is a term that gained currency among the Scholastics, and regarding the Trinity, signifies the *close, intimate loving exchange that is shared by the Members of the Trinity*.

Persona-*person*, the equivalent in Latin patristic theology of the Greek term, *prosopon*, literally, *face*.

Philokalia-the collection of 4th-15th Century texts compiled jointly by St. Nicodemos of Mount Athos (1748-1809) and St. Marios of Corinth and was first published in 1782.

Pneumatological-having to do with the spirit, or more especially, the Holy Spirit.

Pneumatomachi-heretics of the 4th century who denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Powers-also *energies, manifestations* of God in the physical universe.

Prosopon-literally, *face, countenance*, and having the meaning in the context of discourses on the Trinity of an *individual person*.

Relative identity-an account of identity according to which things (substances) are not simply the same or not the same as each other, but may be the same such-and-such but not the same so-and-so. For example, on this account, a famous monument (Cleopatra's Needle, made of stone) may be the same monument as a later one on the same site made of bronze, but not the same lump of stone which was removed from the site and placed somewhere else. In other words, whether one object is the same as another object has no definite answer until we specify the kind of object involved.

Rus'-Russia, Russian.

Sabellianism-the view of Sabellius, and an alternative term for Modalism, which is a form of Monarchianism, a movement of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which attempted to safeguard the unity of the Godhead, but failed to do justice to the independent subsistence of the Son. See *Modalism*.

ST, Social Trinity-the view that the three Persons of the Trinity are in a societal relationship of intimate and eternal love.

Socinianism-the view of Socinus, the Latinized name of two persons, Lelio Francesco Maria Sozzini and Fausto Paolo Sozzini. They both denied the deity of Christ, hence it is a doctrine that is clearly anti-Trinitarian.

Sortal term-a count term, see *count term*.

Substance-having *objective reality*. as for example, a *substance* when we mean an *individual thing*, and *substance* as it is used in *of the same substance*, meaning *of the same nature*.

Substratum-the *substratum* is the *underlying, enduring* thing which underlies an individual substance.

Theosis-the Orthodox teaching of the divinization of humans.

Theotokos-is the way in which Mary was defined by the Council of Ephesus (431), and this definition is in no way confined simply to the Eastern Orthodox Church. She is Theotokos in virtue of the *Communicatio idiomatum*.

Transcripts of the Trinity, expressions which include names of the Trinity, such as, *baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit*.

Triadology-something that has an essential threeness.

Trimurti-in Hindu theology, the trinity of gods, Brahman, Vishnu and Siva, all conceived as an inseparable unity.

Troitsa-the Russian word for *Trinity*.

Trope-a figure of speech.

Tritheism-the view that there are three gods.

Ultra-orthodoxy-an extreme or radical form of orthodoxy.

Unbegotten-neither begotten nor created by the Father.

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